A CRITICAL STUDY

OF THE

LIFE AND WORKS OF JULIA WEDGWOOD

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Abstract

This dissertation tells the story of the life of Frances Julia (Snow) Wedgwood (1833-1913). Snow has been mentioned in many biographies of Robert Browning, and the edited correspondence between her and Browning was published in 1937. E.M. Forster wrote an essay about her in his book Two Cheers For Democracy, but this is the first book-length biography of her. She herself wrote two novels, two biographies, two books of philosophy and dozens of essays for magazines like the Spectator and Contemporary Review, but her reputation as a literary figure, important in the latter part of the nineteenth century, has since fallen into obscurity.

Though she knew personally many of the most important literary figures and theologians of the period, her own life has remained obscure. However, in 1967 a collection of some seventy-five thousand Wedgwood family letters and documents were put on deposit at the University of Keele in Staffordshire by the Wedgwood Company. The Wedgwood Archives at Keele are comprised of three main collections - the Mayer Collection, the Leith Hill Collection and the Mosley Collection. The Mosley Collection, which was only finally read and catalogued in 1980, contains over two thousand letters written to, by or about Snow. There are additional Snow letters, which are held privately by members of the Wedgwood family, and also there are some in other libraries - in particular, Cambridge University and, in America, Yale University and Baylor University. This biography of the great-grand-daughter of Josiah Wedgwood and a niece of Charles Darwin stems from original source material and is the first to be written about this significant Victorian writer and feminist whose life and achievements ought not to be forgotten.

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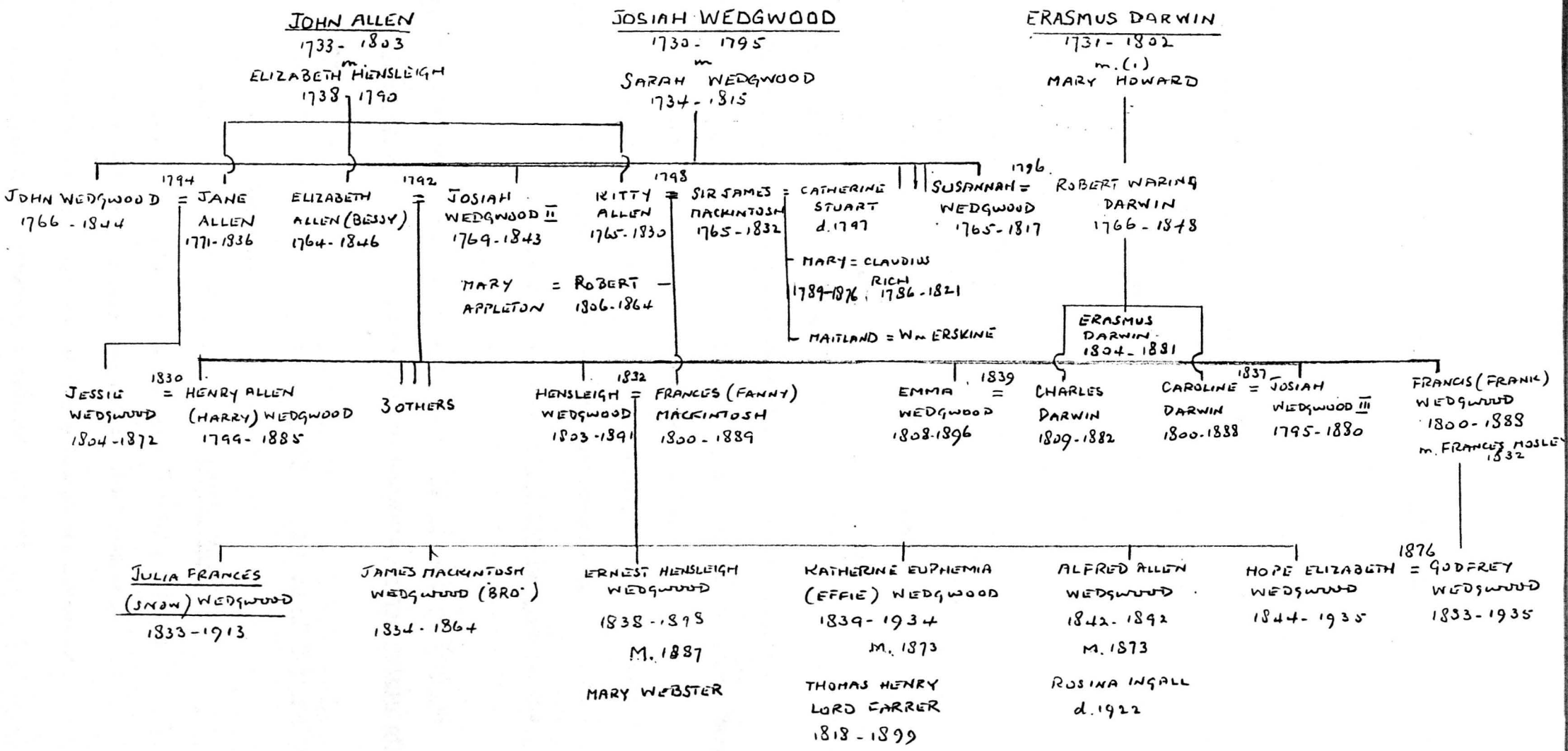
GENEALOGY OF FRANCES JULIA WEDGWOOD.



CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF FRANCES JULIA WEDGWOOD

1800 birth of Frances Mackintosh, Julia's mother

1803 birth of Hensleigh Wedgwood, Julia's father

1832 marriage of Hensleigh Wedgwood and Frances Mackintosh

1833 birth of Frances Julia Wedgwood

1834 birth of James Mackintosh Wedgwood, Julia's brother

1837 Hensleigh resigns Police Magistracy and moves his family to Staffordshire

1838 birth of Ernest Hensleigh Wedgwood, Julia's brother

Family moves back to London

1839 birth of Katherine Euphemia Wedgwood, Julia's sister

1842 birth of Alfred Allen Wedgwood, Julia's brother

1844 birth of Hope Elizabeth Wedgwood, Julia's sister

1846 Julia attends school at Liverpool

1849 Julia attends lectures at newly-founded Bedford College

1851 Julia's first trip to Linlathen in Scotland with her Aunt Mary Rich and becomes convert of Thomas Erskine

1854 Julia's first trip abroad with her parents and Aunt Rich

1856 Julia is secretary to Mrs. Gaskell in Manchester

1858 publication of Julia's first novel Framleigh Hall under the pseudonym of Florence Dawson

1859 publication of Hensleigh Wedgwood's A Dictionary of English Etymology and Julia's uncle Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species

publication of Julia's article On the Boundaries of Science in Macmillan's Magazine

publication of Julia's second novel An Old Debt

1863 beginning of Julia's friendship with Robert Browning

1864 death of Julia's brother James Mackintosh Wedgwood

1865 beginning of friendship with Emily Gurney at Linlathen

Julia terminates Browning's calling upon her

1867 Julia becomes private secretary to Thomas Erskine in Linlathen

1869 publication of Women's Work and Women's Culture

1870 death of Thomas Erskine

publication of John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century

1876 death of Julia's aunt Mary Rich

1888 publication of The Moral Ideal

1889 death of Julia's mother Fanny

death of Robert Browning

1891 death of Julia's father Hensleigh

1892 death of Julia's brother Alfred Allen

1894 publication of The Message of Israel

1898 death of Julia's brother Ernest Hensleigh

1909 publication of Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays

1910 publication of Why I am an Anti-Vivisectionist

1911 Julia's operation for cancer: her eyesight begins to fail

1913 death of Julia Wedgwood

1915 posthumous publication of The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood

INTRODUCTION

A VICTORIAN LADY OF LETTERS

In 1891, when she was fifty-eight years old, Snow Wedgwood wrote of her life and its aims: "I ought to have been something larger than I am."(1)

Such sentiment is not uncommon among accomplished middle-aged individuals who have received a modest amount of recognition, nor is it a sentiment more associated with one era in history than another. Because it reflects a self-awareness free from the snares of self-pity or self-inflation it strikes a universal chord of sympathy. The woman who wrote that sentence nearly a century ago seems like someone whose acquaintance might prove rewarding today.

Born 6th February 1833, in Clapham, London, Snow (Frances Julia) Wedgwood was four years old when Victoria ascended the throne. At the time of the Queen's death in 1901, Snow, then aged sixty-eight, was a minor literary figure, having written two novels, two important theological histories, The Moral Ideal and The Message Of Israel, a biography of John Wesley and dozens of articles and essays, some of which were collected into a book Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays. She had known personally many of the most important literary personalities of the age - Carlyle, Ruskin, Browning, Tennyson, George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, Elizabeth Gaskell - and, through her uncle Charles Darwin, some of the most influential scientific figures such as Lyell, Hooker and Huxley. Within the Movement for Women's Rights her friends included Josephine Butler, Florence Nightingale, Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon. Within the Church her teachers and acquaintances were Charles Kingsley, Francis Newman, A.J. Scott, F.D. Maurice, Thomas Erskine, Benjamin Jowett and Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, Dean of Westminster. At the time of her death on 25 November 1913 she had nearly completed a biography of her great-grandfather Josiah Wedgwood 1 which, some six decades later, remains one of the best Wedgwood biographies.

Her formative and productive life was shaped almost entirely by the Victorian Era; the attitudes, achievements and disappointments of her life are as typically Victorian as sepia-tinted, posed photographs. Her inability to reconcile an intensely idealized concept of love, with a distaste for the physical expression of it, was an inner conflict common to many Victorian women, married as well as unmarried. With expectations focussed on the afterlife, happiness was believed to be achieved by practising the Christian virtues of self-discipline, self-denial and self-sacrifice. Deaf since childhood, Snow never married. Outwardly, to the end of her life, she remained eminently respectable, invincibly intellectual and obstinately asexual. Inwardly, she struggled with religious doubts, hostile resentments and erotic feelings too disturbing to disclose.

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The Victorian period, from 1860 onwards, is all too frequently pictured as a period of certitude and stability. Possibly this was true for the masses, but for exceptional individuals like Snow it was unquestionably a tempestuous period of anxiety and doubt. Since exceptional individuals not only influence and interpret the age in which they live, but, later, for the most part, are themselves the subjects of books, it is fair to ask just how exceptional was Snow Wedgwood. And why should her tempestuous life be of interest now? Her books are hardly ever read today and, if she is remembered at all, it is as an intellectual bluestocking whose romantic friendship with Robert Browning has remained a mystery. The mystery itself may be sufficient cause for a backward glance into a half-forgotten life, but as Snow herself wrote: "How far a life is suited for a biography depends on circumstances to some degree independent of the scale of its achievements... The truth is, that what is needed for a biography is not so much exceptional power or exceptional beauty, as exceptional

illumination. The most ordinary life, could we really see it, would be full of interest."(2)

Snow's life was both ordinary and extraordinary. Though outward events and the surface coldness of her behaviour make her seem the quintessential Victorian lady, much in her tormented temperament and in the concerns which troubled her seem remarkably contemporary. Looking at her life is like looking into a magnifying mirror; the clothes, the hair styles and the manners may have changed, but underneath the old attitudes still persist - we are looking at ourselves.

* * * * *

Now that more than three generations have passed since the close of the nineteenth century, the Victorian era has acquired a new interest and attracted a more sympathetic review of its culture. Few generations are judged tolerantly or truthfully by the generation immediately following. If the lives of Lytton Strachey's "eminent Victorians" provide us with insights into the causes of discontent and the motivations for rebellion, the lives of less eminent, though still exceptional Victorians, such as Snow, may illuminate what it was like to be an intelligent woman caught up in the whirlwinds of industrialisation, anti-intellectualism, Darwinism, Evangelicalism, moral earnestness, assertive nationalism, sexual repression, fanatical feminism and strident chauvinism, all of which were sweeping across mid-nineteenth century England. Paradoxically, Snow was both out of step with the culture of the era and yet, at the same time, very much a product of it. It is this contradiction in her life and character which seems most akin to the experiences of women in the latter quarter of the twentieth century and which makes her a representative figure spanning the gap in understanding between the centuries.

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The word Victorian has many meanings. In popular usage it most

frequently describes a prudish or disparaging moral aversion towards sex. In the Victorian period the word morality was used almost exclusively to mean sexual morality, relegating other sins to minor status. Sex and sin were practically synonymous, whereas sex was often dissociated from love and was approved of only as an act of procreation within the sanctity of marriage. Even married women were taught to look upon sex as something disreputable and degrading, never to be enjoyed and never to be discussed. Lust was an exclusive emotion felt only by men. No decent or respectable woman experienced any sensual feelings, yet the arousal or quelling of male sexuality was the responsibility of the woman and not of the man. Women were either good or bad. The prevailing attitude toward women came from the Biblical concept of woman as either virtuous and chaste, inspiring man toward sacred, tranquil love, or else as an impure temptress corrupting man and enticing him to sin. The less passionate a marriage was, the more it was idealized. Beneath the calm, respectable surface, many lives must have been spent in quiet, desperate misery. Yet Victorian beliefs and practices were not always consistent. Failing to practice what they preached, many led double lives and were adept at hushing up scandals. Husbands guiltily performed their joyless duties to their wives and then sought pleasure and solace outside their homes with women of "ill repute". Wives, forced to sacrifice themselves to shameful acts and to deny any sensual feelings towards their husbands, often developed passionate, non-sexual friendships with other women and suffered symptoms of malaise ranging from female "vapours" to nervous headaches to screaming hysterics.

Spinsters experienced the same romantic friendships and nervous complaints as married women. Snow developed an intense but innocent romantic friendship with Mrs. Russell Gurney which continued over thirty years, until Mrs. Gurney's death in 1896. Snow also drank brandy, often to excess, and throughout her life suffered from

migraine headaches and lengthy, morbid depressions. In 1865, after her separation from Browning and after she confessed her loss of faith in God, she had a nervous breakdown which lasted some eighteen months.

The upper middle-class Victorian household was an absolute patriarchy. The husband was king of his castle and the women of the household were subservient because they were totally dependent upon him. It was accepted without question that an unmarried daughter should always be available to act as a companion to elderly parents or to the surviving parent of a family. Many sad and aging spinsters (and some bachelors) accepted the Christian teachings of sacrificing their own happiness to the higher duties to parents which were imposed by God himself. Some few intellectual women consciously chose not to marry for reasons other than duty to their parents; some wished to avoid male domination and persistent childbearing while others wished to develop their own individuality - but such choices demanded enormous courage. The apotheosis of femininity was to be "a good wife and devoted mother."

Snow and her two younger sisters, Effie and Hope, vowed never to marry - but both Effie and Hope broke the vow when they were in their thirties and married widowers. For nearly two decades Snow was the only remaining daughter in the parental home. Hyper-sensitive to criticism and anxious because of her deafness, she did not have an easy relationship with either of her parents. She felt, with considerable justification, that her mother was cold in her feelings towards her and that her father thought her unattractive as a woman and untalented as a writer. "Your novel quite makes me sick at my stomach," he wrote to her after the publication of her second novel, which he had proposed that she submit to him, chapter by chapter, before being sent to the publisher who had commissioned it. She soon stopped writing novels, directing her energies towards critical essays and theology.

The search for God, which was the dominant passion in her life, was, at least in part, the search for a human father-figure who would love and help and protect her and whom she could idealize with a pure love free from any sensual feelings. It was a search inevitably doomed to failure.

The political position of women in the Victorian era was non-existent. A woman might occupy the throne, but she could not vote. Nor could she become a doctor or a lawyer or a banker or a scientist. Snow was too shy and self-conscious about her deafness to take an active part in politics, though she took an intellectual interest. Temperamentally unsuited to be a suffragette, she supported radical causes in her youth, but was a staunch Tory in her old age.

Well-bred young ladies whose brothers were sent to first-rate public schools were given private lessons in music, art and composition at home. For older well-to-do middle class women, married or unmarried, the only acceptable pursuits, apart from charitable activities usually associated with the Church, were artistic. A woman might paint, preferably in watercolours, which were more feminine than oils; or she might write books, preferably poems or sentimental novels, as biographies and philosophical works were generally thought of as rational and therefore masculine. Intelligence was considered a masculine attribute, and intellectual women, married or unmarried, were seldom thought of as feminine. Snow, who was very feminine in her appearance and in her feelings, disliked being labelled as a woman with a masculine mind. Overtly masculine women and effeminate men offended her as unnatural. But while she accepted that men and women had different aptitudes, she strongly believed in equal intelligence between the sexes, and she supported higher education for women. She both attended and gave lectures at Bedford College, London, and Girton College, Cambridge.

Perhaps because an intellectual woman in nineteenth century

England had so few outlets for her energies, there were almost as many outstanding literary figures among women as men. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Jane Austen, Charlotte Brontë, Harriet Martineau, Maria Edgeworth, George Eliot and Elizabeth Gaskell were all recognized and respected by their contemporaries, as well as by later generations. Yet the Brontës and George Eliot felt that in order to be read seriously it was necessary to write under a male pseudonym. At first Snow also felt it necessary to conceal her identity as a novelist but was bold enough to use a feminine pen-name. Most women were encouraged to look upon their writing not as serious work or as a means of earning money, but as a hobby in which they were fortunate to be gifted enough to give pleasure to others as well as themselves. Doing for others without thought for oneself was a Christian virtue the Victorians greatly admired.

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While no more Victorian women than Victorian men were able to write interesting books of any sort, almost all Victorian women were accomplished letter writers, because letter writing, like making polite conversation, was simply what was expected of good, well-bred women.

Snow was an enthusiastic and prolific letter writer. In that respect she was perfectly in tune with her age. The published letters of the near-famous, as well as the famous, satisfied a curiousity about private lives which Victorian reserve often excluded from direct discussion. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of letters in the lives of those who wrote and received them. Having the purpose of entertaining as well as informing, they were often written with grace and eloquence. And, except in the instance of private criticism or intimate personal feelings, the writer of the nineteenth century letter expected that the recipient would send it on to others among family and friends.

Then, as now, some people preserved letters; others did not. While it was customary during the nineteenth century to keep letters which would be returned after death to the surviving correspondent, practice did not always live up to principle. Some friendships waned over the years; what once seemed important later became trivial. Many heirs had neither appreciation nor storage room; attics were emptied when houses changed occupants; accidents and the ravages of time took their toll.

Biographies are written from what remains, but if all the letters ever written or received were available for study, perspectives and conclusions might be very different. At times it seems almost an axiom that dull letters are preserved and interesting ones burned, for few people wish their secrets and their indiscretions made public, or at least not while they are living. But accidents and fate often determine history. Had not the Snow-Browning correspondence been preserved, who would have known of the importance of the friendship in their lives? References to Browning in Snow's other letters are oblique, and unless one knows of their friendship, it is impossible to comprehend their meaning. Probably in her early life there was another romance of significance of which no direct written trace now remains.

Still, the number and variety of her correspondents who are known and of whom some examples remain is quite remarkable. Naturally she wrote to her parents and to her brothers and sisters. The Wedgwood family circle was constantly enlarged by the marriages of cousins and with these additions of husbands and wives also came their brothers and sisters with more husbands and wives and trains of children, most of whom were corresponded with, visited, kept informed and consulted. Snow wrote regularly to her great-aunts Fanny Allen and Jessie Sismondi and to her aunts Mary Rich and Elizabeth Wedgwood.

With so many aunts, uncles, cousins by the dozen and more distant

relations, it was necessary to be somewhat selective. Over a period of many years she kept up a lively correspondence with her cousins Louisa Wedgwood, Susan Darwin and Henrietta Darwin Litchfield and with her uncles Erasmus and Charles Darwin. Among her Staffordshire Wedgwood cousins, her favourite correspondent was Godfrey, whom she considered to be the only one in his family with an interesting mind - a view undisputed by any other branches of the family.

She corresponded with her mother's friends Harriet Martineau, Ellen Tollet, Marianne Thornton, Jane Carlyle and Elizabeth Gaskell. She had a regular exchange with theologians such as Thomas Erskine, Francis Newman, A.J. Scott, F.D. Maurice, Arthur Penrhyn Stanley and with feminists such as Josephine Butler and Barbara Bodichon. Other intellectual literary friends and occasional correspondents were George Eliot, Walter Scott, Benjamin Jowett, Richard Holt Hutton, Thomas Hardy and E.M. Forster. Less famous correspondents whose letters were on a personal, gossipy level rather than an intellectual dialogue were Florence Nightingale's niece Blanche Smith and her cousins Alice and Hilary Bonham Carter, John Sterling's daughters Hester and Julia, Mrs Gaskell's daughter Meta and Thomas Erskine's Evangelical disciples Emily Gurney and Jane Gourlay. In the accumulation of nearly two thousand letters to and from Snow, there are over forty persons with whom she was in frequent correspondence.

Except for her letters to Browning, which she thought he had destroyed, Snow carefully edited her own correspondence some fifteen years before her death. Undoubtedly she eliminated many facts and feelings which readers today would find interesting. Still, what remains gives a vivid picture of her daily life, for often what seems most unimportant reveals to others what is most important about a life.

In his book English Letter Writing, C.E. Vulliamy notes:

> Letters are valuable and entertaining in proportion to the wit and ability, and above all to the imprudence, of those who write them. For the merit of a really good letter

> is always colloquial; it is full of news and gossip, it is personal, unstudied and indiscreet. It shows the writer without his guards and defences, uncovers all his thoughts and feelings; and that is why honest letters are more informative, more amusing, more pathetic, more vital than any considered autobiography.(3)

Snow not only had wit and ability, but she was frequently imprudent to the point of indiscretion, pouring her feelings on to page after page of reckless self-expression. Though vitality and literary skill are never entirely absent, the style, as well as the content, of her letters is determined by the recipient. Undoubtedly this is true among all letter writers, but those with literary skills and sensitivities are more conscious of their own intentions. In the summer of 1868, when she was spending several months at Linlathen in Scotland with the elderly and aging Evangelist Thomas Erskine, Snow wrote to her cousin Henrietta Darwin:

> I send Effie & Hope(4) very dark pictures of him, & to Aunt R. I dispatch the most glowing letters. Both are perfectly true. Don't you often feel the shot-silkiness of life very dangerous to your reputation for truth? - even as it were yourself? I think sometimes with a shudder, suppose I were to put these letters into the wrong envelopes as they do in Novels, & the white threads were to be returned to my folk, & the black to Milton?(5) Oh mercy! the idea is appalling. Not only wd she be so shocked at my wickedness in thinking such things but at the horrible hypocrisy of the letters I had meanwhile written to her wd seem even worse to her. And all the while I have not said a word to her that is not perfectly true.(6)

Snow's letters to her sister Effie are composed without conscious effort, even at times carelessly, containing such candid afterthoughts as - "Oh! I do think I've told you all that before!" - or - "Bother! This scrap of a letter isn't worth sending" - or - "That last is a poorly constructed sentence, but you know what I mean - actually I feel very headachy and stupid."

On the other hand, her letters to Browning, though by no means devoid of candour, are composed with deliberation and include the same sort of lively descriptions and clever phrases found in her essays, such as - "Everybody knows what a gift of the gab I have on paper and

there is no danger of my stopping too soon when I begin to write" - and - "I like any protest against the woman's tendency to servility, for all poems and fiction are so fond of the opposite view" - and - "To be immortal is to know it, and that I am sure I am not."

Drafts of several letters to Browning were found among her papers after her death. Perhaps calculating composition is characteristic of love letters, for lovers want to make a favourable impression on their beloveds. Because of the double purpose of impressing and of expressing intense feeling, love letters are among the most revealing and most enjoyable reading. For the same reasons, so are hate letters, which have the added interest that it is impossible to doubt their sincerity.

Snow did not write hate letters, or, if she did, they have been destroyed, but hostile feelings openly expressed seem out of keeping with her character. While a few of her essays ("Why I Am an Anti-Vivisectionist", for example) might be viewed as polemical attacks, she generally did not indulge in angry words. Unfavourable comments in her letters spring less from passionate hatreds than from a personal distaste - and the critical scratch of her pen is usually softened by humour. About Tennyson's neighbour and admirer she wrote to Browning: "What a dreadful friend Mrs Cameron(7) must be, my friends here(8) were calling upon her during his presence in the house; when he went out of the room, she fell upon them. 'Oh now do at once tell me what you think of his last poem!... He will be <u>sure</u> to ask me, but mind you do not say anything disagreeable. I always look through the newspapers to see if there is anything that would go against him.' How glad I am you have not a Mrs Cameron! It is amusing to see how that species of woman ignores the wife. Well, there is something touching in every form of hero-worship, but from such poisoned cup-bearing, the Lord deliver us!"(9)

She also felt a personal distaste for George Henry Lewes(10) the "husband" of George Eliot and in 1870 wrote to Emily Gurney: "I was with G.E. on Friday, and she was very interesting and animated, but

there was less in our conversation than before that I felt as coming from a first rate mind. It seemed to me more as if the second rate mind to which she has surrendered herself was telling upon her, - and indeed much of her conversation was only a more graphic and poetic rendering of his ideas."(11) And in the last year of her life she contradicted a description of Carlyle which she felt to be unfair: "Mr Carlyle was not vain, no one who knew him cd concede that. But alas he had much worse sins. I fear he was envious."(12)

While recipients determine the attitudes in which facts are presented and the amount of conscious deliberation in composition, general patterns of expression emerge in all correspondence. Snow was aware of a polite, stylistic repetition in her letters as she candidly confessed: "My dear Miss Gourlay, I was so glad to get your letter, & thought I shd so much enjoy answering it but there has come in so many things - Oh dear, I feel as if I must have a sheet of note paper lithographed with that beginning, only in rather better grammar now I look at it."(13)

Snow's deafness probably made her more eager to express herself clearly and to treasure letters more than most people, for the written word gave her a confidence which was frequently absent in conversation: "Deaf people can only know in others the side turned to them, & I think no one with good hearing knows how much this cuts off. It is not that intimacy is impossible, rather I think everything <u>but</u> intimacy is impossible."(14)

In correspondence there could be a range of distances as well as greater assurance of understanding. Letters also assuaged loneliness, for putting her thoughts on paper was the next best thing to a cosy chat with a sympathetic friend. And all of her life Snow felt lonely, isolated not only by her deafness, but by her critical attitudes and by her Puritanical, and frequently unpopular, view of the human

condition. She was different from others, and though she often felt the difference acutely, she accepted her lot without rancour. "When my letters produce no answer, though of course I don't go on writing, I simply say to myself: 'Ah well, I am quite solitary in my taste for scribbling, among those of my own age. From 14 to 20, I think, is the high tide of correspondence; afterwards it ebbs rapidly! To me I think it will always be the most natural way of expressing myself."(15)

Because writing was her natural way of expressing herself, she wrote letters daily throughout her life. As she grew older the subject matter became less gossipy; there was also less anxiety and less soul searching, yet the enthusiasm and the spontaneity remain. In the last few years of her life her letters are filled with anecdotes and reminiscences. When she was aged seventy-eight, she wrote to a friend of an incident which had taken place in Regent's Park half a century earlier, then abruptly ended the letter with: "Adieu...This is an old woman's letter - and yet I feel so young."(16)

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Snow Wedgwood did not have a particularly happy life. Nor, on the other hand, did she have a wasted life. Indeed, it is remarkable how well she overcame the disability of deafness and the disadvantage of a domineering and cruelly critical father. Differing from many other intelligent and gifted women of the period, she neither asserted herself in feminist causes nor turned all of her abilities inward, thereby succumbing to some nervous illness and leaving no tangible trace of an exceptional mind. Possibly, in complying with expected modes of behaviour, she was typical of most Victorian women, intelligent or otherwise. For women of Snow's class and generation, to abandon thought and turn to practical activity was the soundest protection against terrifying doubts and unmentionable feelings. The direction was clear - stop thinking and do some useful work. Snow did useful work, but, hypersensitive to anything that could possibly be thought

false, she never stopped thinking or searching for some kind of reconciliation between imagination and understanding. Because she could neither outwardly rebel nor inwardly conform, she seems to personify a very contemporary problem.

Because of its contemporary comparisons, its details of ordinary, daily, upper-class existence and its intimate glimpses into the personal lives of some of the major eminent Victorians, the life of this minor eminent Victorian is a link between past and present. Yesterday, or today, Snow is a woman whose conversation would have been thoughtful and amusing and, if sometimes provoking, certainly never dull.

E.M. Forster, who became Snow's secretary and friend when she was at the end of her career and he at the beginning of his, wrote that, in the Introduction to the edited corresponcence between Snow and Robert Browning, the editor Richard Curle had pictured Snow as "much too portentious and bleak a female."

> She was not like that - at least she was not like that when I knew her in her later days. Her deafness made her formidable for strangers, but she was polite and cordial, extremely modest about her work, and decidedly gay. Her support of the Woman's Movement, like her contributions to the Spectator under Hutton, has of couse been forgotten: the world hasn't the time. But she had fine qualities, of the heart as well as of the head, and they ought to be recorded; she could, for instance make a close friendship outside her own class, and though it is easy enough to do this today, owing to the social break-up, it was not easy to do it in the nineteenth century, when the Victorian fabric was still intact, and drawing-rooms seemed drawing-rooms and housemaids housemaids forever.(17)

Forster is right in that her "fine qualities of the heart as well as of the head" ought to be recorded and that she has largely been forgotten not because she was an intellectual anachronism but "because the world hasn't the time." Judged in the context and values of her own century, she was a minor literary figure who failed to find fulfillment in the love of God and who might have found that ineffable

"something more" in the love of a man like Robert Browning. It is impossible not to admire her, but it is also difficult not to concur with her own disappointment in herself. With her natural talents, she really ought to have been something larger than she was.

Chapter 1

Ancestral Portraits (1730-1833)

> "As day and night I walk along this shadowy, unlit gallery, the familiar portraits of ancestors long dead seem more real to me now than some of the living inhabitants of this house. It is strange that the past shd be more alive than the present. I hope that in the future it will not continue to be so to me."
>
> Julia Wedgwood to Emily Gurney
> August 1870

The birth of a child is a sign of hope, the continuation of the present into the future with the consolation that even after death an immortality, however uncertain in other respects, has been achieved. A torch has been handed on. As the first child of Hensleigh Wedgwood and Frances Mackintosh, and the first female of the fourth generation of Wedgwoods since Josiah Wedgwood built the pottery which lifted his family from poverty and obscurity into wealth and recognition, Frances Julia (Snow) Wedgwood entered the world enviably established in society.

The importance in mid-nineteenth century England of belonging to that small, genteel segment of society which prided itself upon its refinement and its respectability is difficult to overestimate. Who you were and, in most instances, what you could become were already decided by what your ancestors had been and whether you were male or female. The axiom that to educate a child it is necessary to begin with the grandparents should be extended in the instance of Snow Wedgwood to her great-grandparents; for it was her paternal great-grandfather Josiah Wedgwood who, in particular, most influenced the destinies of his descendants over the following six generations.

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Josiah Wedgwood's life is a rags to riches story. He was born in

Burslem in 1730, the thirteenth child of Thomas Wedgwood of the Churchyard House Works, an illiterate, not-too-successful potter who was himself among the fifth generation of Wedgwoods who followed the family tradition of making pottery in the district of Staffordshire known as the Potteries or the Five Towns. Wedgwoods had been listed in parish registers as far back as 1370. The name itself originated from an obscure hamlet on the verge of a small wedge-shaped wood straddling the boundary between Cheshire and Staffordshire. Josiah's wife Sally, who was a third cousin, also with the maiden name of Wedgwood, came from Cheshire. Her father Richard Wedgwood was a cheese monger and private banker who was considerably more successful and cultured than most of his Staffordshire relations. Josiah received only two years of formal schooling, leaving at the age of nine to help in the pottery inherited by his eldest brother Thomas.

When Josiah was eleven, he contracted smallpox. The disease left him scarred and permanently crippled, with a stiff and painful right knee. No longer able to work as a thrower on the potter's wheel, he spent long hours modelling in clay, his lame leg propped up on a bench in front of him. For two years he walked with a crutch. Eventually, at the age of fourteen, with the support and encouragement of his mother, he was apprenticed to his brother Thomas for five years to "learn the art, mystery and occupation of throwing, turning and handleing which the said Thomas Wedgwood now useth."

At the end of the apprenticeship Josiah, who was confident of his own abilities and eager to try out new methods, proposed a partnership. Brother Thomas was no more competent or clever than his father Thomas, and he declined because, paradoxically, he thought his youngest brother both a dreamer and also too assertive, bent on changing things. The nineteen year old Josiah then took lodging in Stoke near two of his married sisters and went into partnership, first with Alders and Harrison, and then with Thomas Whieldon, who was one of the most

successful and progressive potters in the district.

During the partnership with Whieldon, which began in 1754 and lasted four years, several decisive events occured which affected the course of Josiah's future life. With Whieldon's knowledge and approval, he began a series of experiments and started to keep the Experiment Books in which he systematically recorded, in a secret code, the thousands of trials he made of clays, mineral earths and metallic oxides in an effort to perfect new bodies, glazes and firing techniques. In the first of these books, the young potter summed up his future goals: "I saw the field was spacious and the soil so good as to afford an ample recompence to anyone who should labour dilligently in its cultivation."(1)

During the same period, he again became seriously ill and was forced to spend several months confined to bed in his lodgings over a draper's shop. He was visited often by his sisters and by his brother-in-law the Revd William Willet, pastor of the Unitarian Church in Newcastle, who loaned him books and then came to discuss them with him. He was also visited by his cousin Sally who by this time had become a tall, delicately pretty young woman of twenty-two. The childhood friendship now developed into a romance. Josiah became as determined to marry Sally as to succeed with his own pottery and to improve his station in life intellectually as well as socially and financially. Because of his wealth and superior social status, Richard Wedgwood was in no mood to see his only daughter matched with a comparatively poor potter. He told Josiah that he would consider his suit when he could match, guinea for guinea, the £4,000 which Richard proposed to settle on his daughter as her dowry. On the face of it, this seemed an impossible condition. Yet Sally, who was as strong-minded as Josiah, had agreed to marry him and to wait until he could meet her father's stipulation. She had confidence in him even if her father didn't. Nor did Richard Wedgwood appreciate the extent of Josiah's tenacity or his

imagination.

The partnership with Whieldon ended amicably in 1758, and Josiah's successful experiments with new glazes persuaded him of the feasibility of setting up on his own. He was not of a disposition to remain for long a junior partner in any enterprise in which he felt himself competent. Old Richard's stern conditions for marrying Sally had encouraged him to gamble on making his fortune quickly. So, with a £10 legacy from another cousin and savings of a similar amount which he had accumulated from the partnership with Whieldon and with help from Sally's uncles Thomas and John Wedgwood of the Big House, who leased him a small building called the Ivy House for £10 a year, the twenty-eight-year-old Josiah set up on his own as a Master Potter.

The business was an instant success. Within a year Josiah had hired his brother John to represent him in London and his cousin, another Thomas Wedgwood, to supervise the workmen who now numbered a dozen, though he had begun with only one helper. Three years later he moved to larger premises known as the Brick House. His fortune was accumulating, and twice a month, on Sundays, he rode over to Spen Green in Cheshire to call upon Sally and upon her begrudging yet now admiring father.

In the spring of 1762, while riding to Liverpool on business, Josiah had an accident. On one of the narrow, muddy lanes, the wheels of a wagon passing in the opposite direction bumped against his horse, shoving horse and rider into a fence. Josiah's bad knee was injured again. Six years later the leg was amputated just above the knee. Somehow, however, good seemed to result from his misfortunes. During his illness at Stoke he was attended by young Dr. Erasmus Darwin. During the period when he was confined to bed at an inn in Liverpool, he made the acquaintance of Thomas Bentley, a cultured man who owned an import-export business. Erasmus Darwin and Thomas Bentley became Josiah's closest friends. In 1769, when Josiah built his Etruria

factory, which gave impetus to the Industrial Revolution and which continued producing pottery for one hundred and seventy years, Thomas Bentley was his business partner. Six years earlier, when Josiah finally had amassed the fortune to match Sally's dowry and marry her, Erasmus Darwin had become the family physician.

In whatever he attempted Josiah succeeded. Quite simply he revolutionized the eating habits of the western world. Before he perfected his cream coloured earthenware, which Queen Charlotte allowed him to call Queen's Ware, the rich ate off silver and Oriental porcelain, and the poor ate off pewter and wooden trenchers. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century most classes from Russia in the east to the American Colonies in the west, could afford to eat off Wedgwood. Even in his own lifetime his name had become a household word, synonymous with fine ceramics whether in dinnerware and useful household articles or in decorative items, such as vases, urns, plaques, medallions and busts. On the monument to him in the chancel of the church in Stoke-on-Trent is the fitting and often quoted inscription: "He converted a rude and inconsiderable manufactory into an elegant Art and an important part of National Commerce."

Josiah's genius extended beyond the confines of industry. He adapted the engine turning lathe employed in metal working to use in pottery making; for his invention of a pyrometer for measuring high degrees of temperature within pottery kilns he was made a Fellow of the Royal Society. He was a Unitarian and a supporter of liberal causes, such as American Independence, the French Revolution and the Abolition of Slavery. He was a prime mover in the development of the canal system and in the improvement of the turn-pike roads without which the expansion of commerce would have been impossible.

Like many geniuses, Josiah possessed a volatile disposition. He was impatient, quick to anger, demanding, domineering and suspicious of the motives of others. He was subject to severe depressions and

could be both humorous and gloomy, with a passion for abstract speculation. On the positive side, he was generous, affectionate, gregarious and energetic in all of his pursuits. He enjoyed the company of women, was happy in his marriage and took great pride and interest in his children - though possibly he was too indulgent with his three daughters and too demanding with his three sons.

While she shared her husband's intellectual interests, Sally was quite different in temperament from Josiah. Undemonstrative in her feelings and strongly opinionated, she was so introverted and aloof that others, including her own children, were often uncomfortable in her presence. Still, she was a gracious hostess, and the Wedgwood home, Etruria Hall, was constantly visited by friends and relations, who spoke of the generosity and freedom of the household. Sally's reserved manner was, however, a trait characteristic of many of the Wedgwoods in the three generations that followed.

At the time of Josiah's death in 1795 there were more employees at Etruria than all of the Five Towns had inhabitants in 1730, the year of his birth. Having begun his career, physically handicapped and with a legacy of only £10, he died worth half a million pounds. "The death of Mr. Wedgwood grieves me very much," Dr. Darwin wrote to their mutual friend Richard Lovell Edgeworth.(2) "He is a public as well as a private loss."(3) Within a single generation Josiah had lifted the Wedgwood family from provincial obscurity to national importance. He had given his children all of the advantages that accompany wealth, fame and power; but they were very different in temperament and ambition from their father. Josiah was a man for all seasons; his children were very much of their own time, country and class.

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On the maternal side of the family, Snow's great-grandfather John Bartlett Allen, was also very different in temperament from Josiah

Wedgwood. He was born in 1733 exactly a century before Snow's birth. His family originally came from the north of Ireland and settled in Pembrokeshire in Wales in the early part of the seventeenth century. In 1728 his father, John Allen of Goodhooke, elevated himself into the landed gentry by marrying Joan Bartlett, heiress of Cresselly, a large estate with coal mines and an ancient manor house overlooking the far shores of Milford Haven. John Bartlett Allen, their son, succeeded his father as squire in 1752. He had attended Westminster School, bought a commission in the First Foot Guards and fought in Germany during the Seven Years Wars before retiring as Captain and returning permanently to Cresselly to look after his farming and mining interests. Having torn down the old house and built a larger, more impressive grey stone one, he followed the example of his father and married an heiress, Elizabeth Hensleigh, the only daughter of John Hensleigh of Panteague who was a prosperous attorney. Little is known of the character of Elizabeth Hensleigh Allen who died in 1790, having borne her husband two sons and nine daughters.

Many descriptions remain of the character of John Bartlett Allen, all of them unflattering. He was an ill-tempered man who behaved cruelly toward his workers, his neighbours, his relations and, most particularly, toward his children. His daughters were beaten if they did not provide charming company and clever conversation at the dinner table; however, he did respect their wishes in not bringing to Cresselly his second wife, the daughter of one of his miners. This marriage was the scandal of the county; but scandal did not deter John Bartlett from installing his second wife in a small house at Creswell Quay and starting a new family. Commuting between the two households at irregular intervals, he terrorized them both.

Despite their father's unpredictable temper and harsh discipline, or possibly because of it, the nine Allen sisters were attractive, accomplished and devoted to one another. The two brothers, John

Hensleigh and Lancelot Baugh, escaped the paternal tyranny by attending Westminster School and Cambridge. The sisters were educated at home.

As their father seldom allowed them to leave Cresselly and few people visited the house because of the squire's inhospitality and unpopularity, the Allen sisters were isolated, with few opportunities to meet men who might be suitable prospects for husbands. Probably John Bartlett did not wish his daughters to marry, for on the rare occasions when they were asked to parties, he usually waited until they were standing in the hall, ready to depart, then he would come storming out of his study and order the carriage back to the stables and his daughters upstairs to take off their finery. Once a year, however, he relented, and guests were invited to Cresselly.

Thus, in August of 1792, Josiah Wedgwood II, then aged twenty-three and a dutiful but disinterested partner in his father's pottery, arrived at Cresselly with his older sister Susannah to attend the parties and races that took place during the Summer Assizes at Haverfordwest. Young Jos knew at first sight that Elizabeth, the eldest of the Allen sisters and five years older than he, was the woman he wanted to be his wife. Bessy was not as immediately certain as Jos, but she agreed to return with him and his sister to Staffordshire to meet Josiah and Sally and the rest of the Wedgwood family, all of whom welcomed her warmly. The contrast between the lively, hospitable and egalitarian atmosphere at Etruria Hall with the oppressive, restrictive and often frightening regimen at Cresselly was as persuasive as young Jos himself. The marriage took place in 1793 and was the occasion for the start of another romance. Jos's older brother John, who had disappointed his father by resigning his partnership in the pottery and buying a partnership in a London banking firm, fell just as suddenly in love with Jane (Jenny) Allen as his brother had done with her older sister, and they were married a few months later in 1794. By marrying into the Allen family, which claimed direct descent from the Cecils,

the Wedgwood brothers had elevated themselves from tradesmen into the established landed gentry.

At about the same time that John and Jenny married, and much to the delight of Josiah, Susannah Wedgwood became engaged to marry Dr. Robert Darwin, the son of Josiah's old friend Erasmus. Of course Susannah and Robert had been childhood friends, and undoubtedly their fathers had arranged their futures long before any thoughts of marriage occured to either. Nonetheless it was a satisfactory match, though unfortunately Josiah died of a sudden and painful illness of the jaw and throat[(4)] before the marriage took place. The younger Wedgwood daughters, Kitty and Fanny, never married, nor did the youngest son Tom, a chronic invalid who died at the age of thirty-four, but who had inherited his father's scientific talents and is credited with the discovery of the principles of photography.

Susannah was her father's favourite child, not only because she was the first born and a girl but possibly because she was the most like Josiah himself in both appearance and temperament. Robert Darwin was also like his father in appearance - both men being over six feet in height and in mid-life weighing well over three hundred pounds - but he was unlike his father in temperament. The elder Darwin was jovial and inventive; Robert was a man of extreme contrasts. Given to spells of absolute silence, he was at other times a compulsive talker. Though he was opinionated and, it is said, seldom listened to the opinions of others, he nonetheless was thought to have the gift of reading other people's minds. Certainly he was gifted in mathematics and made sound financial investments. Had he not been influenced by his father's wishes and expectations, he would probably have preferred to be a businessman rather than a doctor. Clearly he had a better head for business than his brothers-in-law, and after Josiah II assumed the management of the pottery, Robert Darwin audited the annual accounts of the Wedgwood pottery until responsibility was handed over

to succeeding generations.

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Josiah II and his brother John were even less interested in the pottery business and certainly less suited to it, than Robert Darwin was to medicine. Of course the sons of famous fathers are often burdened with expectations difficult to fulfill, but Josiah II, or Jos, was doubly encumbered by a name immediately associated with the commerce he so despised. Early on he had made the distinction between gentlemen and men engaged in business, a distinction he felt keenly. When his father requested that he manage the showroom in London, he agreed on the condition that the arrangement be temporary. "I have been too long in the habit of looking upon myself as the equal of everybody to bear the haughty manner of those who come into the shop."(5)

Jos had attended the University of Edinburgh and travelled abroad. He had been educated to be a gentleman, and gentlemen were not "in trade." He did, however, possess a strong sense of duty, and he was shrewder, if less forthright than his brothers, in his relations with their father. He took an active part in the business up until the time of his father's death so as to comply with Josiah's wish to keep the Pottery in the family. But less than four months after inheriting the largest share of his father's estate including the Etruria factory and the family home Etruria Hall, he withdrew from the day-to-day management of the pottery. With Bessy and their two young children, he left Staffordshire and moved first to Surrey and then to Dorset where he established himself as a country squire, breeding Merino sheep and issuing commands from afar to his cousin Thomas Byerley(6) who was left with the unenviable job of managing both the Staffordshire factory and the London showrooms and warehouse. As a further sign of social advancement, Jos joined his brother John in abandoning the Unitarian Chapel of their childhood and joined the Established Church,

an act that would certainly have displeased his father. For ten years (1795-1805) Jos dashed back and forth from Dorset to Staffordshire "like Royalty" in a splendid closed carriage with velvet curtains, drawn by four white horses and accompanied by coachmen, postillions and footmen in handsome livery.

Finally, in 1807, a decline in trade and the near-bankruptcy of the Pottery caused him to return permanently to Staffordshire, where he established himself at Maer Hall, a country estate fifteen miles from the Etruria factory. Josiah II was not a great man like his father, but he was conscientious. He not only carried on the Pottery but served as a Member of Parliament. He supported liberal causes and was a friend and patron of many famous scientists and poets, including Humphry Davy, Wordsworth and Coleridge and James Mackintosh, who had married his sister-in-law Catherine (Kitty) Allen.

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Bessy Allen Wedgwood was the most loved among the nine Allen sisters. Wise and generous, she was the one to whom the others turned in times of crisis or sorrow. She also had a keen sense of humour and was as gregarious and informal in her manner as her husband was reserved and formal. Maer Hall soon became, and remained for nearly half a century, the favourite of all the Wedgwood-Darwin-Allen homes.

Josiah II and Bessy had eight children, four sons and four daughters. The four sons - Josiah III (Joe), Henry Allen (Harry), Francis (Frank) and Hensleigh - had no more interest in the Pottery than their father and uncles before them. After their father's death the Pottery was put up for sale, but there were no purchasers. So, partly because they had no particular talents in any other directions, but mainly because somebody had to do it, Joe and Frank carried on in the family tradition. It was fortunate that the Allen coal mines, as well as the Pottery, provided an income for all eight of the children,

and their cousins.

Jos and Bessy's eldest daughter Elizabeth was born with a spinal deformity and remained a spinster. Another daughter, Fanny, died unmarried at the age of twenty-six. Of the six children who married, only two, Frank and Charlotte failed to marry first cousins. Josiah Wedgwood III married his cousin Caroline Darwin and a second Wedgwood-Darwin marriage took place between Emma Wedgwood and Charles Darwin. The second son Henry Allen married Jessie Wedgwood, the daughter of John Wedgwood. The youngest son Hensleigh married his first cousin Fanny Mackintosh and had six children, the eldest of whom was Snow.

The Mackintosh background was less affluent but no less distinguished. Fanny's father James Mackintosh (1765-1832) was born in Scotland at Aldourie on the bank of Loch Ness. The only child of Army Captain John Mackintosh of Kellachie and Margery Macgillivray, James inherited little in wealth or property. Fortunately, however, his intellectual gifts were recognized when he was a young schoolboy at Fortrose in Rosshire; but the difficulty then, and throughout his life, was that his talents and interests were so varied that he found trouble concentrating his energies in a single direction. In 1780 he graduated from Kings College, Aberdeen. Too poor to enter the Scottish Bar he studied medicine at Edinburgh and received his degree in 1787. Disinclined to practice medicine, he moved to London, staying with a cousin, attending lectures and writing political articles. His father died in 1788, nine years after the death of his mother, so he sold Kellachie, the modest family estate. The following year he married Catherine Stuart, the sister of Daniel Stuart, who later became editor of the Morning Post, and returned to London where he supported Horne Tooke[7] for Westminster. Through Tooke he was introduced to Charles James Fox[8] and Richard Brinsley Sheridan[9]. At the same time he wrote Vindicae Gallicae, a highly praised reply to Burke's

Reflections on the French Revolution. He was called to the Bar at Lincoln's Inn in 1795 and joined the home circuit. In 1797 he was travelling the circuit when his wife died, leaving him with three young daughters. A year later on 10 April 1798 he married Kitty Allen whom he had met at the John Wedgwoods, to whom he had been introduced by a fellow barrister and friend of Wordsworth's, Basil Montagu. (10)

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In London the Mackintoshes had a wide circle of friends, entertained often and were themselves entertained even more often. At one of the Mackintosh dinner parties a social club was formed and christened The King of Clubs. It lasted for twenty-four years, meeting at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. In addition to Mackintosh and his brother-in-law John Hensleigh Allen, the members included Thomas Wedgwood; Lord Holland; Lord Lansdowne; Sydney Smith, the witty Canon of St. Paul's; his brother Bobus Smith; John Tobin the dramatist and his brother James; James Scarlett, a barrister and Member of Parliament who later became the first Baron Abinger and Lord Chief Baron of the Exchequer; Richard "Conversation" Sharp, a successful hat manufacturer with a keen interest in politics; and Thomas Campbell, the poet, ~~who described The King of Clubs as a gathering place of "brilliant talkers dedicated to the meetings of the reigning wits in London."~~

In 1804 Mackintosh received a knighthood on his appointment as Recorder of Bombay. Kitty, who had given birth to a daughter Fanny four years earlier and was pregnant again, was presented at Court, an event which caused great excitement among the Allen sisters. The politically astute Mackintosh had Kitty's portrait painted by John Hoppner, Court painter to George III, and his own portrait painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence, Court painter to the Prince Regent.

In February of 1805 the Mackintoshes sailed for India after a great round of parties with the Wedgwoods and the Allens and Mackintosh's King of Clubs friends. Kitty had mixed emotions about living in India and suffered depression during the long voyage over. Mackintosh had accepted the position for two reasons. He thought that in India he would be able to devote his energies to writing, because his judgeship would not occupy him full-time and because the social distractions of London, which he so enjoyed, would no longer be a temptation; there would be fewer friends and fewer distractions in Bombay. The second reason was financial; he thought that he would be able to live more cheaply in India and then return to England at the end of five years with a substantial Government pension. Neither of these reasons came to be realized. He was no more able to discipline himself in Bombay than in London, and his History of England and the philosophical works he had envisioned progressed no more rapidly there. Nor did he make any progress in assembling and editing the philosophical writings of Thomas Wedgwood for which he had accepted payment of £100. After Thomas's death in 1805, Mackintosh told Jos that the manuscript and Tom's original notes were "lost at sea" on the return voyage from India, an explanation which Jos received with some scepticism. But if the amount of time scheduled for literary endeavours had been grossly overestimated, so had the household economies. Mackintosh soon found himself in debt and applied for a loan from his brother-in-law Jos who was himself in debt to another brother-in-law Robert Darwin. Few things are more annoying than finding one's own faults reflected in another, and all that Mackintosh received was a rather sanctimonious lecture on the virtues of thrift rather than a loan. Predictably, Mackintosh began to question if, after all, he truly preferred a political career, with historian as a secondary interest, rather than the other way round. If indeed this was so, a number of important years

would have been wasted in India, by removing him from the current political scene in London.

From the start Kitty disliked India. There, more so than in London, she was forced to confront the shortcomings in her husband's character - laziness, procrastination, irresponsibility, exaggeration and an infuriating inability to face reality. On the other hand he was charming, witty, kind and affectionate. Kitty also had problems with her step-daughters, particularly after the births of her two other children, Elizabeth (Bessy) born in 1804 and Robert born in 1806. The eldest step-daughter Mary, who was thirteen when they sailed from England, was an intelligent, strong-willed girl deeply attached to her father. Mary never fully accepted her step-mother and, with her sister Maitland, three years younger, contrived to make life difficult for her. Eighteen months after their arrival in India Kitty became physically ill. A year later she had her first severe nervous collapse. Shortly after Kitty recovered, Mary announced her intention to marry Claudius James Rich, a brilliant Orientalist employed by the East India Company. To Kitty's relief, the marriage took place and the young couple left Bombay for Baghdad. In 1809, Maitland married William Erskine, a Scottish clerk whom Mackintosh had brought with him from England. But even with her two step-daughters no longer under the same roof, Kitty found existence in Bombay unbearable. Mackintosh's erratic behaviour, his sudden enthusiasms, his extravagances, his tendency to take on any and every cause and his inability to manage his finances, left her anxious and uncertain. She suffered from migraine. Finally, in a depressed and indecisive frame of mind, she returned to England with the younger children. Mackintosh had expected to follow in nine months, but two years elapsed before he was able to wind up his tangled affairs. "My life flows by," said he, "and it is time to do something. I therefore am resolved on going home, with a view of exerting myself most actively in public life, if I was

thought worth a seat in Parliament, or devoting myself to profound retirement and intense study, if the doors of St. Stephen are barred. I have hitherto been neither a man of action or speculation, but have been too much divided between them to allow myself a fair chance in either."(11)

When Mackintosh returned to England, he was offered a seat in Parliament through the influence of his old friend John Scarlett, now Lord Abinger. He stood for and won the seat for the county of Nairn. Before returning to their London house in George Street, Westminster, in June of 1812, when the new Parliament would commence, Mackintosh, Kitty and the children did a round of visiting relatives in the country. At Maer, twelve year old Fanny made the acquaintance of her Wedgwood cousins, including, and most particularly, nine year old Hensleigh.

The youngest of Bessy and Jos's four sons, Hensleigh was the intellectual of the family. He attended Rugby and Christ's College, Cambridge, where his favourite studies were mathematics, languages and philosophy. He was 8th Wrangler in the mathematical Tripos and elected a Fellow of the College. Though frail as a child, as a young man, he, along with his brother Harry, were thought to be the handsomest of the Maer Hall Wedgwoods. Of a gentle disposition, he inherited his father's solemnity, tenacity and high moral duty. Having studied at Gray's Inn, he was called to the Chancery Bar, but he never practiced. He disappointed his father by twice refusing a partnership in the pottery. Like his father, Hensleigh also had no doubt as to whom he would marry. Since childhood he had been in love with his cousin Fanny; and as his mother observed: "She (Fanny) writes here very often and her letters are particularly agreeable. I may well be interested about her, for I think she and Hensleigh will never help falling in love with each other so much are they together."(12)

Fanny was a handsome, dark-haired girl with a mind and a will of

her own. She shared her father's enthusiasm for politics and history, helping him with research and becoming his amanuensis. She and Hensleigh saw a great deal of one another when the Mackintoshes were in London and Hensleigh was at Gray's Inn. Unlike the Wedgwoods at Maer, the Mackintosh household was not a happy one. In 1823, after a long illness, Fanny's younger sister Bessy died at the age of nineteen, and two years earlier, Claudius Rich had died of cholera in Persia while his wife was visiting in Bombay. When her sister and brother-in-law Erskine left India, Mary Rich decided to return to London to live in her father's house. Mackintosh was instrumental in securing for her a pension of £200 a year from the East India Company and in initiating negotiations with the British Museum for the purchase of Rich's vast collection of Oriental manuscripts, coins and sculpture, which was eventually bought for £7,000. Mary's income contributed to the financial stability, if not to the personal harmony, of the Mackintosh household.

Mary Rich was a dramatic, strong-willed woman whose extraordinary life flip-flopped from one extreme to another. Passionately in love with her husband, she willingly accompanied him in his romantic and dangerous explorations of the Middle East. Sometimes dressed as a man, sometimes hidden among luggage and crates, she boldly travelled through areas forbidden to women. The sensuous, mysterious life in Persia appealed to her appetite for adventure. Fearless and defiant, she was a crack shot with a pistol. Her faith was less in God than in her adored husband. After his death, she had a nervous breakdown. The manner in which she chose to do this was as flamboyant as some of her earlier escapades. Upon receiving the tragic news she fell to the floor unconscious. Overnight her hair turned white. For three months she appeared dazed and unable to speak. One day as she held her baby nephew Claudius, she burst into tears and uncontrolled sobbing. From then on she was in perfect control of her actions and her reason, but

her personality had changed. Solemnly requesting that no one ever again utter aloud the name of Claudius Rich in her presence, she became as spiritual and sanctimonious as in the past she had been sensuous and rebellious.

Predictably she enjoyed a glamorous flash of religious conversion. On a visit to Scotland she became a disciple of the Evangelist Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, a distant cousin of her brother-in-law William Erskine, and the remaining fifty-five years of her life were spent studying the scriptures in chaste and spartan surroundings. Sex and sin were synonymous. She always dressed in black, attended church services more often than many clergymen, and was quite convinced of her own ability to determine accurately who had been visited by the Holy Ghost and who had not.

With limited success she attempted to impose her strict moral code first upon her half-sister Fanny and later upon Fanny's three daughters, Snow, Effie and Hope.

At the time of Mary Rich's return to her father's household, Mackintosh had become a member of the so-called Holland House set, the centre of power in the Whig party. In particular, he was a favourite of Lady Holland. Not having the same moral outlook as his eldest daughter, he often slept at Holland House, and for two years the Mackintoshes were given the use of the Hollands's Bedfordshire home Ampthill Place. Mackintosh's attractiveness to women was legendary and, in part, the cause of some of the tensions within his marriage. When Madame de Staël visited London, she chose Mackintosh as her English cicerone, and Mackintosh made several trips to Paris and to Switzerland to visit her.

After moving from Ampthill Place back to London, to Clapham, to be near their friends Sir Robert and Lady Inglis[13] and their wards the nine orphaned children of Henry Thornton,[14] Kitty became more anxious and depressed. In July of 1829 Bessy Wedgwood expressed fears

about Kitty's mental state to their sister Jessie, who had married the Swiss historian J.C. di Sismondi: "I have now and then a nameless fear about Kitty which makes me wish she should be soothed by her family as much as possible, and when I think how short a time we may some of us have together, I am desirous above all things that our last years may pass in harmony and affection."(15)

By the autumn of 1829 Kitty had had enough of Sir James's philandering, and possibly even more critically, enough of his financial ineptitude. Without telling anyone of her plans, if indeed she had formulated any, she simply left him. Having gone first to Paris and then on to the Sismondis in Switzerland, she died there on 6 May 1830 from a stroke. On 25 May 1830, Jessie wrote to Bessy:

> ...I cannot but think her death, thus sudden and without suffering, is a most merciful dispensation. She could neither make herself nor others happy, and I dreaded the future (which must necessarily have darkened more and more on her as she advanced) so much, that it seems to me as if a great evil was withdrawn from me, in its being denied her. If she could have got Fanny out to her I think she had some vague notion of never returning. The suspicion of this, that the pains in her limbs were exaggerated for this purpose, made me slow to perceive her real ails and harden my feelings towards her. The event has shown how unjust I was in my suspicions, and I now believe she made very light of the fore-running symptoms of her terrible disorder...Her husband and children will be enough reconciled to her loss, alas! she has been long lost to them...(16)

At the time of Kitty's death Mackintosh and Fanny were in Italy visiting Madame de Staël's daughter Albertine, the Duchesse de Broglie. Mackintosh had two motives in taking Fanny abroad. He intended to go to Switzerland and hoped Fanny would be able to persuade her mother to return with them; he was also concerned that Fanny was too much in the company of her cousin Hensleigh and might be thinking of marriage. Selfishly he did not want her to marry. Nor did her half-sister Mary Rich, who earnestly desired chastity and self-sacrifice as much for others as for herself. But marriage, not martyrdom, was Fanny's goal. In many ways she was as strong-willed and as undisciplined as her

father and as Mary had been in her youth.

After Kitty's death and after Hensleigh had assured Mackintosh that "Even if I ever am able to marry Fanny, I should not wish to take her away from you if things could be managed otherwise,"(17) Mackintosh's attitude became more lenient. He even agreed to use his influence to get a Government post for Hensleigh, who feared that the practice of law, which he did not enjoy anyway, would not provide an adequate income for raising a family. After several disappointments, Hensleigh was eventually appointed to a Police Magistracy, a stipendiary post which brought him £800 a year.

Fanny and Hensleigh were married in January of 1832 at St. Andrew's, Holborn. She was thirty-two and he was twenty-nine. None of the other Wedgwoods, Darwins or Allens of this generation married under the age of thirty. After a brief honeymoon in Tunbridge Wells, Hensleigh and Fanny returned to London to an expensive house in Langham Place which they shared with Mackintosh, Mary Rich and Mackintosh's only son Robert, who had come down from Edinburgh and who also, through his father's influence, had received a Government appointment as Commissioner of Bankruptcies. Mackintosh himself had recently been appointed a Member of the Board of Control, which was the home government of the East India Company, and received an additional income of £1,500.

There were considerable tensions in the household, particularly among the three men, but before there was any open disagreement Mackintosh suffered a freak accident. At a dinner party on 2 May 1832 a chicken bone lodged in his throat, which was later removed by a surgeon. An infection developed, followed by additional complications, and he died at Langham Place on 30 May 1832. A year earlier Jessie Sismondi had written of him to Bessy Wedgwood:

> I think of his life which I now look upon as almost finished with the greatest pity; not without blame, it is true, but it is almost lost in pity. He had

> an understanding to comprehend all the beauties of the high moral feelings and those of affection, but not the heart ever to feel them, so that he knew their heaven, sighed for it, yet, as if a curse was on him, could never put his foot into it. He loved passionately and fondly only one person (his wife) in the world, and she never could love him, though he was the only person in the world that truly loved her.(18)

The costly Mackintosh-Wedgwood house in Langham Place was given up. Hensleigh and Fanny and Mary Rich moved to Lark Hall Lane in Clapham, near the Inglises and their wards, who lived at Battersea Rise. Robert Mackintosh resigned his position as Commissioner of Bankruptcies, took lodgings on his own and began the formidable task of finishing his father's History of England which Mackintosh had been working on for the past fifteen years.

Mary Rich and, rather less frequently, Hensleigh and Fanny, now attended the Revd. John Venn's[19] Evangelical Church in Clapham and became a part of what had become known as the "Clapham Sect," a closely-knit group within the congregation who were noted for their piety, their material successes and their active support of social reforms. One of the leaders of the Sect was Thomas Macaulay's father Zachary Macaulay, a merchant who for fifteen years was manager of the Evangelical journal The Christian Observer. Other prominent members were William Wilberforce, Hannah More, James Stephen and a former Governor General of India, John Shore, later first Baron Teignmouth.

The Evangelical doctrine, simply expressed, was one of personal salvation through a state of grace, which was achieved by daily prayer, daily Bible reading, observance of the Sabbath, abstention from alcohol and gambling and a stern objection to all frivolous pursuits. Evangelicalism was the new, vital religion within the Established Church, and it did for the affluent, educated upper middle class of the nineteenth century what Methodism had done for the poor and illiterate in the eighteenth century.

The Evangelicals believed in "speaking in tongues," in a divine

guidance in human affairs and in material success. True believers were encouraged to set about making money to the glory of God, provided they tithed to the Church and contributed to the social betterment of those less fortunate. Going to Church was a pleasure, a social and intellectual affiliation enjoyed by the membership who attended services not only twice on Sunday, but frequently two or three times during the week as well. Transcending all was the unassailable belief in a future life where friends, family and loved ones would meet again and would recognize each other and be happy. Mary Rich never had any doubt of being reunited in Heaven with her beloved Claudius.

The environment in which the Wedgwood-Darwin-Allen-Mackintosh clan lived, and into which Snow was born a century after her great-grandparents entered the world, was not only devout but established, secure, rich and cultured. The clan was closely-knit but not insular; for in each generation they moved in a wide circle of famous and influential friends, in business, politics and art; yet, when it came to marriage, there was a kind of smug exclusivity in the assumption that the best choices were among themselves, as in the letter Jessie Sismondi wrote to her niece Emma Wedgwood when she learned of her engagement to Charles Darwin: "I knew you would be a Mrs. Darwin from your hands; and seeing Charles did not come on, which Fan and I used to speculate on and expect it in every letter from Maer, I began to fear it was Erasmus."(20)

Though he kept bachelor quarters at Great Marlborough Street in London, Charles's elder brother, Erasmus Alvey Darwin, was almost as much a part of the Hensleigh Wedgwood household as Mary Rich. In totally different ways, he was just as eccentric and certainly more enigmatic. A hedonist and an agnostic, he early on abandoned any pretense of a career. His father had settled sufficient income for him to live comfortably if he did not have to take on the cares and expenses of a family. So, having to do nothing, he did nothing.

Competitiveness and self-assertion had no part in Ras's gentle, amiable and indolent character. Throughout his life he enjoyed the company of talented, interesting women and the flexible regimen of a dilettante and a gentleman of leisure. His name was often linked with both married and unmarried women, including Jane Carlyle and Harriet Martineau, but his sister Caroline expressed the view that the great love of his life was Fanny Wedgwood, the wife of his cousin and close friend Hensleigh. Whether this love was in part romantic or only that of an intimate and devoted friend is debatable. At least one Darwin scholar(21) views him as having no active sexual life, possibly even being a latent homosexual. The evidence for this is unconvincing. While Erasmus did indeed seek out the company of some "safe" women who were either married, like Fanny Wedgwood and Jane Carlyle, or else like Harriet Martineau ~~who~~ had no sexual interest in men, such selective friendships do not necessarily indicate a lack of sexual interest but merely protection against the entanglement of marriage. The notion that men ~~who~~ choose women for intimate friends because they share the same perceptions and interests, including men as lovers, is also inappropriate. Erasmus had as many or more men friends than women. His men friends - such as Hensleigh, Sismondi, Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, Joseph Hooker and Thomas Huxley - were heterosexuals with masculine minds and masculine pursuits, including often the pursuit of women. Nor did being a bachelor imply sexual inversion. The prurient Victorian double standard condoned prostitution, and bachelor gentlemen frequently chose servants for aptitudes that were not always associated with household management. It was a time when ladies were ladies and parlour maids were fair game for bachelors and husbands alike. Probably if there had been indications or suspicions of homosexuality the family would have destroyed any written mention or suggestion, but it is also true that among the thousands of letters to and from and among his family extant in the Wedgwood and Darwin

archives some indiscretion would probably have been uncovered. Instead, numerous mentions of his love for women, and particularly for Fanny, have been preserved.

In a letter dated 29 May 1833 Catherine Darwin wrote to her brother Charles, who was then in Montevideo on his voyage in the Beagle:

> He (Erasmus) seems to be more in love than ever with Fanny Hensleigh and almost lives at Clapham. Papa has long been alarmed at the consequences & expects to see an action in the Papers. I think the real danger is with Emma Wedgwood, who I suspect Mr Erasmus to be more in love with than appears, or than perhaps he knows himself.(22)

If Erasmus's love for Fanny was romantic, was it ever consummated? Certainly Fanny was in love with Hensleigh when she married him. After the marriage, on the surface at least, she was a proper Victorian lady, a dutiful wife and mother, adhering to all the conventions; but privately she was no stranger to intrigues and unconventional behaviour. Her father's flirtations and love affairs were no secret, and Fanny counted among her own close friends Caroline Norton whose love affair with Lord Melbourne and subsequent divorce trial were the chief topic of court gossip in 1836. Nor did she ostracize John Stuart Mill and Mrs. Harriet Taylor or George Eliot and George Lewes for their illicit love affairs. She is most frequently described as strong-willed, passionate, generous and impulsive by friends and relations alike.

In summary, it seems more likely than unlikely that the love between Fanny and Erasmus, which lasted over half a century, was a sexual love, at least during one period in their lives.

* * * * *

From a genetic point of view the Wedgwood inheritance had been so reinforced by the persistent intermarriages - Snow's great-grandparents were cousins, her grandmothers were sisters and her

parents were first cousins - that certain physical and mental traits emerge distinctly. The Allens were small and slight of build. As a grown woman Snow was only four feet ten inches tall and never weighed more than one hundred pounds.(23) The Allens also possessed a tendency toward deafness among the women. Neither of Snow's parents had any impairment in their hearing until they were well into their eighties, yet both of her Allen grandmothers and four of her Allen great aunts suffered various degrees of deafness from middle age onwards. None of Snow's three brothers had any hearing difficulties, yet both of her sisters were quite deaf in their latter years. Snow's disability was, however, the most severe. By the age of three it was recognized that she was deaf in one ear and had only partial hearing in the other. By the time she was forty she was almost totally deaf.

Vivaciousness, charm and a tendency towards depression were also regarded within the family circle as Allen traits. Depression was also associated with the Darwins. Erasmus, Jr., elder brother of Robert, took his life at the age of forty by walking into the River Derwent during a thunderstorm on 31 December 1799. Robert Darwin was also subject to lengthy bouts of depression alternating with hyper-activity. This syndrome was handed down to all four of his daughters, two of whom, the unmarried Susan, and Caroline, the wife of Josiah Wedgwood III, experienced depressions lengthy and severe enough to be considered illnesses. In mid-life Caroline suffered a depressive withdrawal from society which lasted for thirteen years. She then experienced a sudden miraculous recovery which was permanent, and she died at the age of eighty-eight. Her daughter Sophy and her grand-daughter Margaret Vaughan Williams suffered from similar ailments but did not recover from them.

On the more cheerful side, however, typical Darwin traits were imagination, inventiveness, enthusiasm, mathematical ability and a healthy skepticism. Yet in spite of the skepticism and a

proliferation of medical degrees in the family, hypochondria and/or genuine ill-health was a way of life among the Darwins.

Typical Mackintosh traits were intellectual interests, charm, a gift for extemporaneous speech and procrastination. Typical Wedgwood traits were seriousness, dedication to duty, silence, common sense and lack of humour. "Wedgwood is a good man," the Revd. Sydney Smith allegedly remarked of Josiah II, "it is a pity he hates his friends."(24) And two generations later Hope Wedgwood observed of her nieces and nephews: "It is a pity there is not more vice in the family; we have enough virtue and dullness."(25)

Virtue and dullness were characteristics of the era, at least on the surface. And the surface, or the way things were seen to be, was often more valued than truth. Perhaps it is an over-simplification to say that the whole of Victorian culture resulted from a combination of Evangelicalism and Industrialization, yet in viewing as typical of the Age the life of one cultured, upper-middle class Victorian woman, Snow Wedgwood, other influences pale by comparison.

Chapter 2

Snowiana (1833-1846)

> "I always went to bed as a child elaborately expecting the Judgment Day; remembering that passage about its coming as a thief in the night, and not feeling sure about my own accounts in the reckoning, I thought that the best measure to keep it off."
>
> Julia Wedgwood to Robert Browning
> 9 September 1864

Born in Clapham, London, on 6 February 1833 during a heavy snowstorm, Frances Julia Wedgwood was given the affectionate pet name of Snow because her Aunt Rich said that she was as tiny and fragile as a snowdrop. Since she was handicapped from birth by partial but increasing deafness, it was fortunate that she was imaginative and possessed a literary talent, for despite the social effects of industrialization, the job options for intellectual, upper-class women in mid-nineteenth century England were non-existent ~~strictly limited~~.

Florence Nightingale wryly observed that among respectable women there were only three paths among which to choose: "A literary woman, a married woman or a hospital sister."(1)

Snow's grandfather Josiah Wedgwood II was in Clapham at the time of her birth. Having been elected to Parliament to represent the newly-formed borough of Stoke-on-Trent, he had rented lodgings near the House of Commons but spent weekends in Clapham with Hensleigh and Fanny. In early March Bessy, accompanied by their two unmarried daughters, Elizabeth and Emma, also came to Clapham. Though she had never fully recovered physically from a stroke(2) she had suffered four years earlier or emotionally from the shock of the sudden death of her daughter Fanny(3) nine months earlier, she now seemed in reasonably good health. She was delighted with the baby Snow, who was her second grandchild. (Godfrey, the first child of Frank and

Fanny Mosley Wedgwood, was born on 26 January 1833 at Etruria Hall in Staffordshire.)

Bessy stayed with Hensleigh and Fanny for three weeks and then, with Elizabeth and Emma, went to Roehampton to visit her niece Lady Gifford[4] before returning to Staffordshire. There she suffered another stroke during which she fell and permanently damaged her spine. Dr. Peter Holland[5] was summoned, and Jos, Hensleigh and Fanny drove out in a carriage from London. Though she survived, she spent seven months in Roehampton and was never able to walk again without assistance. Over the next fourteen years, until her death in 1847, she experienced a progressive deterioration both mentally and physically. While Bessy had periods of lucidity even after she was permanently confined to her bed, Snow never knew her grandmother as the clever and charming woman she had been in her prime. Snow's earliest recollections of the household at Maer were of her grandmother sleeping, smiling, lying in bed all day and never being quite sure of whose little girl Snow was.

* * * * *

A brother, James Mackintosh (Bro) Wedgwood was born in 1834. He and Snow were inseparable during their early years which seem, on the whole, to reflect the innocent, idyllic picture of childhood so often painted in Victorian fiction. There were handsome parents, dozens of doting relatives and a large staff of kindly servants. A Nanny took Snow and Bro for rides in the carriage and for walks on Clapham Common. But if all was carefree and happy in the nursery, the drawing room and Father's study had more serious concerns. Hensleigh was unhappy in his position as a Police Magistrate because it necessitated the administering of oaths which he believed to be forbidden by the gospel. As early as 1834, only two years after he had received his appointment, he contemplated resigning, but was persuaded by his father to reconsider, as such a course was bound to result in

hardship to his wife and children. "The burden of the sacrifice, if you resolve to make it, will fall with greatest weight on your wife & children," his father argued, "& it is your duty to take care that you do not injure them without a conviction that a higher duty requires the sacrifice."(6)

Three years later, when Snow was four, Hensleigh decided that duty to his conscience was more important than money. In December 1837 he resigned his Police Magistracy, leased the house in Clapham and moved Fanny, Snow and Bro, the new baby Ernest Hensleigh, who was only six weeks old, two maids and a nurse to Maer while he returned to London to find another post. Aunt Rich, as Snow always called her, went to stay with her friends the Inglises in their house on Bryanston Square in London, and then took temporary lodgings near her friends the A.J. Scotts.(7)

There was further upset at the time of the move since the house was robbed the night before they left for Staffordshire. Fanny lost some of her silver and table linen, her jewellery and her clothes. Harriet Martineau, the quintessential radical journalist and candid, chatty, letter-writer, wrote to Fanny: "The robbery was a sad finish. I should not wonder if we were almost as sorry as you about it. I am afraid you have no black gown with a hole in it at present, and that all you have looks sadly new. I wonder who is wearing the pretty blue you came in when you last entered our doors."(8)

Most of the Wedgwoods, Darwins and Allens disapproved of Hensleigh's action which deprived his wife and children of two thirds of their income, yet they admired him for his moral stance. His Aunt Fanny Allen observed: "I am very sorry that his conscience demands this sacrifice... It is the first instance I have known of a great sacrifice made to a Christian principle."(9)

Charles Darwin, who was soon to become engaged to his cousin

Emma, Hensleigh's youngest sister, described the situation as "a most distressing case; many thousand people might be searched and not so excellent, clever & admirable a pair could be found as H. and his wife - and now they are actually thinking of going to America! - though I cannot but hope that something may turn up."(10)

America seemed to the gentry with a comfortable position in the social structure not a land of opportunity but a settlement for the lower classes - or a refuge for those among their own class who had done something shameful. Josiah II hastened to re-offer Hensleigh the position in the family pottery, which he had previously refused with the excuse that it was not large enough to provide adequate income for four partners and he did not want to cause hardship on his father and his two brothers Josiah III (Joe) and Frank. His father persisted with the offer not only because he didn't want his youngest son emigrating to America but also because he believed that of his four sons Hensleigh had the keenest mind and the best judgment for business.

Without giving his father a definite answer and leaving Fanny and the three children at Maer, Hensleigh returned to London in the hope of receiving another Government appointment which did not contradict the principles of his conscience. Harriet Martineau expressed the feelings of their London friends when she wrote to Fanny on 20 February 1838.

> ...Well, dear, how are you? I fear you have to support something of a struggle in spirits, in this time of doubt and suspense. Your husband looks well and cheerful, too. I wish I could help him in his object, - help any of you anyhow. He talks of going into the pottery. Surely with £500. pr. an: and a house you would have enough to save you from all present anxiety. He would be busy about business, and you with the bairns; and all you would have to bear would be the loss of London society, - a great loss, certainly; but not too much to bear for the privilege of a released conscience. We do and shall feel the loss of you very sadly; but we never complain. We should make ourselves unworthy of you if we did. Eras: has borne it far better than I at all expected. He speaks often

> of you, which is good for him; and (I need not say) with all tenderness.(11)

Harriet goes on to describe an evening at the Carlyles with Ras and Hensleigh when they all had the most interesting talk on death - "kinds of death, anecdotes, ways of viewing it, the true crucifixion story, etc." She then confides that she likes "Carlyle more, but - not his wife (entre nous). She is so coquettish, so different when she and I are alone, and when others are by; and she breaks in with little jokes and wanting notice when we are talking as above."(12) Described by one biographer as "that dyspeptic Radical battle-ax,"(13) Harriet liked to be the centre of attention, particularly in the company of men. Doubtless she was jealous of Jane Carlyle, not only because of Jane's wit but because of Jane's flirtatious friendship with Ras and, possibly even more important, because of her friendship with Fanny. For her part, Jane was jealous of Harriet's "blush and coquetry" with Carlyle and of Harriet's more or less being accepted by the men as one of them whereas Jane and Fanny, no matter how clever, were first and foremost "wives."

Jane also wrote to Fanny shortly after Hensleigh had left her and the children at Maer:

> My Husband has gone to dine with your Husband, and Erasmus, at Mr. Erskine's.(14) Thence they proceed together to a "flare-up" at Miss Martineau's (which I wish success to with all my heart - at lowest, that it may consume its own smoke!) And now while these our so-called Lords and Masters are following their pleasures without us; a pretty idea is come to me, that I all alone here will have a little quiet talk with you all alone there. For I feel a sympathetic assurance that you are alone at this moment even as I am - your feet on the fender as mine are - looking into the fire as I was doing until I began to write.(15)

Jane Welsh Carlyle and Fanny Mackintosh Wedgwood had a great deal more in common than might be supposed at first glance. There was less than a year's difference in their ages; Fanny was half Scottish, still retaining ties with Scotland and Scottish relatives.

Jane never forgot her Scottish heritage. Both women had idolized their fathers and had been treated by them more as boys than as girls. As young married women, both were hyper-sensitive, subject to severe mood swings, dominant in personality and far too intellectual for the model Victorian wife. Yet, in a sense, both <u>were</u> model Victorian wives, suppressing their own talents to the demands of their husbands and directing their energies, apart from the home, toward <u>causes</u>, such as the unification of Italy, prison reform and anti-vivisection. (Fanny Allen referred to her niece Fanny as such a "causy person."[16]) Both Jane and Fanny had an inner conflict about reconciling femininity and competitiveness with men, a conflict quite unknown to Harriet Martineau, who was either by nature or by conscious choice a decidedly masculine woman.

Fanny quickly realized that she did not want to live permanently in Staffordshire where there was none of the intellectual excitement of London, even if one was "only a wife." The pottery business was dull; the Wedgwoods were dull. Fanny knew that for Hensleigh and for herself a far more exciting world was possible.

* * * * *

For five-year-old Snow the exciting world was just the opposite. At least a portion of each of her summers had been spent at Maer with her grandparents, her bachelor uncle Joe, who, after seventeen years of deliberation, finally married his cousin Caroline Darwin in 1837, and her unmarried aunts Elizabeth and Emma, who were far less formidable than Aunt Rich, with her cautionary tales about the punishments awaiting naughty little girls who disobeyed their elders. For at least a part of each holiday at Maer, her Uncle Ras visited, too. Catherine Darwin noted this to her brother Charles after the first summer visit:

> He (Erasmus) went to Maer for a week which he enjoyed extremely and was very happy there with Fanny Hensleigh,(17) her baby Miss Snow, as she is called

(short for Snowdrop) and Emma Wedgwood, all his favourites around him.(18)

Two summers before the possibly permanent move to Maer, Fanny and Hensleigh had left Snow and Bro with their grandparents, uncle and aunts while they went on a holiday alone. Emma wrote to Fanny: "Bro was very sentimental the day you went & observed in a solemn tone several times Mummie? No - & shews me your chair set for luncheon. Snow sd the 1st day on going down to dinner 'we shan't find Mum.'"(19)

Their Aunt Elizabeth took them for rides in a pony cart, and when Snow met her grandfather at the entrance of the long drive that led to the Hall, he lifted her up and held her in front of him on his horse. Uncle Joe let Bro ride with him. Snow now found playmates other than Bro. Among her Staffordshire cousins there were Louisa, the daughter of Harry and Jessie Wedgwood, who lived at nearby Seabridge, and Godfrey and Amy, the children of Frank and Fanny Mosley Wedgwood, who lived in the old Etruria Hall. As Godfrey was only eleven days older than Snow, the two young cousins became close friends and confidantes, a relationship that was to last all of their lives. Years later Snow recalled that some of her fondest memories were of the nursery at Etruria Hall, of the swing in the garden there and of the candlelit drawing room where the uncles and aunts played cards.

Despite the ensuing proliferation of brothers, sisters and first cousins - sixty-two, eventually, all of whom knew and visited one another in various family houses scattered about England, Scotland and Wales - Snow's character and talents apparently held a special fascination for her older relations. Her Aunt Elizabeth wrote of "her curious, romantic drawings - her sensitive nature - she is forever talking to herself and making up stories which are as good as the stories of most grown-ups - so trusting and affectionate - something in Snow's thoughtful manner which promises an exceptional woman - Snow is a most entertaining child, always smiling and happy." She

began a scrapbook of Snow's childish sayings and drawings and compositions which she titled Snowiana.(20)

In a letter to Snow's great-aunt Jessie Sismondi dated 5 June 1839, Elizabeth describes the activities of her young niece.

> The other night while Snow was undressing she desired her mother to write down some verses she had been making. I must send you them, for I think they are more than mere parrot verses of a child with a good memory. She is 6½. The last line I suppose gives a child an idea of more perfect happiness than it does its elders - there is nothing they dislike so much as going to bed.
>
> In the month of May,
> When the fields look gay,
> Nothing seemed to have sorrow;
> Oh wait till to-morrow
> When there will come a wintry day
> That will drive away this joyful May.
> We, like the flowers, fade away,
> For we are made of dust and clay,
> And then comes a wintry blast
> Which drives them away with the wind and the past.
> But for the saints there's another day,
> Which is a longer happier day,
> Where they never say good-night,
> Always peace and never fight,
> With crowns of glory on their heads,
> There they never rest on their beds.(21)

While hardly memorable poetry, the awareness of the human condition, of death and of a glorious life hereafter - "another May" which is happier and reserved for saints only, the orthodox Evangelical doctrine - is somewhat unusual for a six and a half year old child of any background in any era. Two years earlier Snow's great aunt Fanny Allen, the youngest of her two Allen grandmothers' seven sisters, and who a decade before had observed that Florence Nightingale was "an exceptional child who might well make a mark in the world,"(22) made similar observations of Snow. At the age of four Snow was reading stories as well as inventing them. A governess, Lucy Bennett, taught Snow and Bro reading, writing, drawing, music, arithmetic and French. Aunt Rich personally supervised the Bible reading and religious training, which, at that innocent age, happily was not Snow's sole

preoccupation. Fanny Allen noted how pleased the child was when Nanny curled her hair, and when questioned as to what Aunt Rich would think of such frivolity, Snow acted out a most unlikely scene in which her Aunt Rich viewed her curls with pleasure and said "Oh Snigs, Snogs, how elegant you are!"(23)

* * * * *

The year 1839 was, however, a memorable one for more important reasons than the young Snow's burgeoning literary talents. Late in 1838, after having been turned down for several Government posts, Hensleigh courageously, or, possibly, stupidly, refused again to enter the Pottery, which was suffering trade losses and severe financial problems. He reiterated to his father that he did not want to cause hardship to him or to his brothers. He went on further to justify his refusal by explaining that, although he loved dear Maer and being in the company of his loving brothers and sisters and his parents whom he honoured and revered, both he and Fanny preferred life in London to that in the country. Probably he was more influenced by Fanny's wishes than by his own inclinations. A man of inflexible moral principles, he resembled his cousin Charles Darwin in his hypersensitivity, his delicate health and his preference for solitary, scholarly pursuits, surrounded only by his family and a few close friends. He did not enjoy parties and "Society" in the way that Fanny did. As early as 1837 he had begun work on his Dictionary of English Etymology, which was called by the family "Hensleigh's word-book." After he and Fanny had been separated for almost nine months, Fanny had had quite enough of Staffordshire with its dreary climate and its insular inhabitants. With the encouragement of Aunt Rich, his brother-in-law Robert Mackintosh (who in 1839 had married Mary Appleton, the daughter of Nathan Appleton, a wealthy merchant banker from Boston) Ras, and Charles, who was now living on Marlborough Street near Ras, Hensleigh

moved his family back to London where he took a short lease on a house at 4 Clifton Terrace in Notting Hill. It was smaller and less fashionable than the house they had occupied on Clapham Common. Still, in spite of what they believed to be a most precarious financial state, it appears that the household staff included a manservant, a cook, three maids, a nanny and a governess.

In November of 1838, shortly after Fanny and her "three bairns" had left Maer, Emma became engaged to her cousin Charles, an event which all of the Wedgwoods and Darwins had been expecting for months and which probably had increased the urgency of Fanny's wish to return to London. During the time Fanny was living at Maer, she and Emma had become particularly close. In a sense Fanny replaced Emma's dead sister (also named Fanny) who had been so much closer to Emma than her older sisters Elizabeth and Charlotte. Charles and Hensleigh were close friends, and Charles and Emma's decision to live in London made London even more attractive for Fanny and Hensleigh. On New Year's Day 1839, to celebrate future success and happiness, Ras gave a dinner party which included his brother Charles, who was to be married at the end of the month; Fanny and Hensleigh, recently returned to London, and waiting hopefully to hear news of a Government post for which Hensleigh had applied, and Jane and Thomas Carlyle. Thomas was involved in the ideas behind Chartism, and Jane was contemplating writing a story herself. Ras was simply happy that Fanny had returned to London.

* * * * *

Charles and Emma were married in the little church at Maer by their cousin the Rev. Allen Wedgwood.[24] Only a few of their Staffordshire and Shropshire relations and close friends were there; Bessy, too weak to attend the service, was asleep when the newly-weds departed for London shortly after the ceremony.

A week after the wedding, when Charles and Emma felt themselves settled in their house at 12 Upper Gower Street, they gave their first dinner party for Hensleigh and Fanny and Ras. On the afternoon of the party two gentlemen, unable to find Hensleigh in Notting Hill, called at the Darwin house with a letter of great importance. The post Hensleigh had applied for and was waiting to hear the outcome was Registrar of Cabs, an office of less emolument and importance than the magistracy he had given up but nonetheless one which carried sufficient prestige and which would resolve his immediate financial difficulties.

Emma wrote to her mother:

> ... We began speculating whether it would be any piece of good fortune for him but we settled that it was most likely only about oaths. Very soon after, Hensleigh came in, quite agitated with happiness at having obtained this registrarship. It is such a wonderful piece of good fortune I could hardly believe it; and it is given him in such a gratifying way, without any testimonials or bothering of anybody, and it is so pleasant not to have had any suspense. I should like to know whether it is all Lord Russell's doing, or whether Lady Holland has had any hand in it. She has been very civil lately and sent them 2 dozen apples, etc. Fanny looked very happy about it too. Hensleigh had called on Mr. Whittle Hervey and was charmed with his manners. He does not think it will be at all a hard place. He will be employed from 10 till 4, about four days a week. Fanny's maids have been very uneasy at the shortness of our housemaid and are afraid that she is not tall enough to tie my gown. She is about the size of Betty Slaney, so I hope Fanny set their minds at ease on that point. Our dinner went off very well, though Erasmus tells us it was a base imitation of the Marlborough Street dinners, and certainly the likeness was very striking. But when the plum-pudding appeared he knocked under, and confessed himself conquered very humbly. And then Edward is such a perfect Adantless(25) in his best livery that he is quite a sight. Fanny and Hensleigh slept here, and Hensleigh went the next morning to the office. It seemed very odd beginning all at once...(26)

On the first of June Hensleigh and Fanny moved into a house at 16 Gower Street, only two houses from Charles and Emma, and Aunt Rich returned to live with them. No doubt Aunt Rich had ambivalent feelings

about Hensleigh's moral stance; her religion forced her to approve it, yet her own comfortable living arrangements had been disrupted by Fanny's move to Staffordshire. Probably Aunt Rich contributed substantially to the upkeep of the Gower Street house which she considered appropriate; it had two drawing rooms, one for her and one for Fanny and Hensleigh. Aunt Rich of course brought her private maid, and there was the further addition of a coachman and carriage. Between the Darwin and Wedgwood houses another house had been leased by old Staffordshire friends, the Tolletts of Betley Hall, whose daughters Georgina and Ellen were special friends of Emma.

Snow spent almost as much time with the Darwins and the Tolletts as with her own parents. Emma loved children and frequently wrote brief anecdotes about her niece to Elizabeth for the book of Snowiana.

> Snow was rather naughty one day here, so after they were gone to bed and she had been repentant, Fanny heard her say to Bro., "Oh Bro., I can't bear it, turn your face towards me, kiss me Bro." So Bro cautiously asked, "Is your face wet with tears?" However he turned and kissed her which seemed to give her great comfort.(27)

That even as a child Snow felt an irreconcilable dichotomy between human passions and devotion to God, which was to dictate the ambivalent behaviour pattern of her adult life, is reflected further in the earliest of her preserved letters, written to her mother on 6 December 1841, when she was aged eight.

> My dear Mama
> You canot (sic) think how sorry I was this morning to make you so unhappy. I do not think any thing made me naughty but pride I have prayed to God to forgive me & I think you will I am really sorry Oh! Mamma you do not know how unhappy I was to see you so unhappy all to day (sic) I know I have been cross for 2 or 3 days I cannot help disliking my lessons but I will try to do them well Goodbye - (28)

Most children wish to please their mothers, frequently dislike their lessons and are often cross and naughty; nor is it unusual for an eight year old child, at least in the nineteenth century, to pray

for forgiveness. The awareness of the sin of pride being the cause of her misbehaviour, however, seems extraordinarily perceptive for so young a child, even in a very religious home. Yet few children were exposed to so much piety and praise for self-sacrifice and fulfilling one's duty. There were not only the examples of Aunt Rich and her father but also the unmarried sisters Susan and Catherine Darwin who looked after their father Dr. Robert Darwin, who was confined to a wheel chair. Elizabeth Wedgwood, in 1839 aged forty-six and the only unmarried child of Jos and Bessy, repeatedly assured her brothers and sisters that it was not only a privilege but a genuine pleasure for her to devote her life to caring for the invalid parents who were so good and kind. Jos had developed palsy. His posture became stooped. His walk, a short-gaited shuffle with the arms dangling in front of the body, became so difficult that he frequently lost his balance and fell. The tremor in his hands and arms contrasted with a rigidity of facial expression. In September of 1842 he had a serious fall and suffered the loss of all voluntary movement, though occasionally he had periods of great agitation and uncontrollable shaking. Like Bessy, he, too, was bedridden for the rest of his life. Perhaps fortunately Bessy's mind was then so far gone that she never knew of her husband's illness.

At this time, the second Wedgwood daughter Charlotte, who had married the Revd. Charles Langton and had one child Edmund, moved back to Maer to help Elizabeth with her two helpless patients. Charlotte insisted that it was her duty, but, unlike Elizabeth, she did not say it was a pleasure.

* * * * *

Josiah Wedgwood II died on 12 July 1843 when Snow was ten. All of the uncles and aunts and the great-uncles and aunts who were able to

travel returned to Maer for the funeral. He was buried in the small churchyard at Maer, and his nephew the Revd. Allen Wedgwood, who had married Emma and Charles, read the service. Bessy was then in a vegetable-like state and never knew of his death.

While this was the first family death to make an impact on Snow's life, there had been a recent surfeit of births and illnesses. On Gower Street, in November of 1839, Hensleigh and Fanny's fourth child Katherine Euphemia (Effie) was born. A month later, on 27 December 1839, the Darwin s' first child William Erasmus (Doddy) was born, and fourteen months later a daughter Annie arrived. Sophy, the first child of Joe and Caroline Darwin Wedgwood, died in 1841 when she was less than a year old. In 1842 they had a second daughter whom they also named Sophy. By 1842 Hensleigh's brothers Frank and Harry each had three children. And all four of the Wedgwood wives and Emma as well were again pregnant.

Charles had not been in good health for over a year, and in July of 1842 he and Emma finally decided to move to Downe in Kent where it was hoped that the quiet of country life would prove salubrious for both him and the babies. The Darwin s' third child Mary Eleanor, born at Down House on 23 September 1842, died three weeks later, and Emma wrote to Fanny asking Hensleigh to place a notice of the death in The Times. Hensleigh had not been feeling well himself and, as usual, despite the serious illnesses of both his parents, sent Snow, Bro and Erny to Maer for three months. This was not as much of an imposition as might be supposed. Not only was there a large nursery and ten bedrooms, but there were eleven servants in the permanent staff. Furthermore the children were sent to Maer with three servants of their own from London to look after their needs.

They returned from Staffordshire in October, but their father was still unwell with a severe bronchial illness which was feared to be infectious. Thus, in November of 1842, only two months after the

Darwins had moved from Gower Street to the country, Snow, Bro and Erny, then aged nine, eight and five, were sent away, this time to Down House to stay with their Darwin aunt and uncle. They were accompanied by Bessy Harding, a thirteen year old nursery-maid from Staffordshire recommended by the Frank Wedgwoods. At Down the young maid took the three Wedgwood children and the two Darwin children, Doddy, aged three, and Annie, aged eighteen months, for a walk in the woods. They all lost their way, and Snow and Doddy were separated from the others. Emma wrote to Fanny

> ... Snow and Doddy missed the rest somehow and she brought him home from more than a mile off, dragging him along up to their ankles in mud. She kept him from being frightened or crying and from crying herself, and behaved like a little heroine.(29)

No doubt the eldest child was expected to behave like a little heroine, but Emma goes on to beg Fanny to leave the children as long as she wishes, for they are content - "Snow happily curled up in a corner reading and occasionally joining in a romp with the little ones." Snow was reading the stories of Maria Edgeworth gathered together in six volumes titled The Parent's Assistant. The purpose of these stories was to teach by example, but they were also highly popular with children, Two years earlier Snow had met Maria whose father Richard Lovell Edgeworth had been a close friend of Snow's great-grandfather Josiah Wedgwood. Maria herself had been a friend of Snow's Mackintosh grandparents. Now in her mid-seventies Maria was still friendly with Fanny who had read her stories when she was a child. Snow also enjoyed the stories of a closer friend of her mother's, Harriet Martineau, who after a serious illness had moved to the Lake District. Harriet was an invalid for five years, spending most of her time in bed, until, in 1844, she experienced a miraculous recovery by mesmerism.

When she was only six, Snow began to correspond with Harriet who

wrote regularly to her mother. And on 30 September 1840 Harriet, who evidently was working on her four volumes of children's stories The Playfellow published in 1841, wrote to Snow:

> I have a favour to ask of you, dear Snow. Will you, when you have time, make a list for me of the stories and story-books that you and Bro like best? I should like, too, to know what you like least. If you put down "Parent's Assistant," put down not only the book itself, but how you like the separate stories in it. I have been asking my nephews and nieces everywhere to do the same thing; and it will be of use to me. When I have your list, I will tell you what I want it for. I assure you, however, that I am not going to print it.(30)

After the publication of The Playfellow, Harriet again wrote to Snow:

> Dear Snow,
>
> I really am much obliged to you for sending me letters, - particularly as you do not expect me to answer every one. If you or Bro (whom I find, I must now call Macky) will write to me sometimes when your mama is ill or busy, I shall be very much pleased. It is rather sad, however, that somebody is always ill when you write. If your mama had not been able to put in that she was better, your last would have made me very sad. - I am glad you like my stories, - particularly the last, as there are not to be any more.
>
> I find I like reading stories far better than writing them...
>
> I wish you could see my flowers, now so brilliant in the sun. I have ten tulips in full blow, and three noble hyacinths, and a few crocuses. Some fine narcissus, and more hyacinths are coming forward nicely. Have you any flowers at home?
>
> Or do you do what I cannot, - walk out to gardens to see them? I hope Effie will be better long before you write again. Give her a kiss for me, and believe me, dear Snow,
>
> Your affectionate friend
> Harriet Martineau.(31)

When the three eldest Wedgwood children finally returned from Down to London in December of 1842, they discovered that Effie was no longer the baby of the family and that they had a new baby brother, Alfred Allen. The confinement had been a difficult one for Fanny, and she was tired and depressed. Hensleigh, too, was still weak from his long bout of illness, and the worsening news from Maer was a constant concern.

* * * * *

At the age of eight Snow began a correspondence with her Uncle Ras and with Jane Carlyle, who apparently fascinated her. Snow kept one of Jane's early letters to her which shows Jane's wisdom as well as her kindness.

> Amiable Snow
>
> Most joyfully should I do anything thy little heart desires, within the bounds of possibility and reason: but the fishes I really cannot give thee, the fact being that they are not and never were in my keeping.
>
> Your mistake, however, is a very natural one... I saw your little form in the distance when I called, and should have liked to give you a kiss but it could not be done without a good deal of embarrassment to all parties concerned. You will say that so very simple a transaction need not have embarrassed any one, unless perhaps you, who might have felt indisposed to go out and be kissed. But grown people, dear Snow, are apt to be troubled about many things: in the simplest affairs they find so many little niceties to be attended to, that they are about as badly off as Gulliver when the Lilliputians bound him with infinite pack-thread. If you hope then, dear child, by growing older, to have more of your own way, you are labouring under complete delusion: When you are a tall woman you will be surprised to find how very little you can get done of what you would like to do, even when there is no harm in it to the naked eye. Meanwhile, let me live in your remembrance, and be assured of a warm reception and an immediate answer to any communication you may be disposed at any time to favour me with.(32)

Her Uncle Ras replied to her letters with equal kindness and an understanding of the sorts of incidents that amuse children. When she wrote to him in Shrewsbury about the family's activities during a seaside holiday, he wrote to her of the activities of her Darwin-Parker[33] cousins who were visiting in Shrewsbury. "Aunt Susan took little Mary into town to have her hair cut & she told the man to cut it as close as he could so when she (Mary) came home & looked in the glass, she said 'Why Sue, you have made me a down right boy.'... Little Charley was here also and was frightened by a great big buzzard."[34]

Inevitably Snow, in the company of her parents and her brothers and sisters, spent a few days with Dr. Darwin and his unmarried daughters Susan and Catherine at The Mount in Shrewsbury on their visits to Maer. The long illnesses of Dr. Darwin, who was confined to a wheelchair, and of Snow's grandparents, combined with the selflessness and self-sacrifices of the unmarried daughters of both households, so much praised by the brothers and sisters whose lives and homes were elsewhere, made a lasting impression upon the young Snow. To sublimate one's own desires to care for the aged and helpless was an act of supreme goodness. This idea occured as a theme in her later writings - and in her own life as well.

From early childhood on Snow seemed unable to separate care from self-sacrifice, and the classical conflict of egotism versus altruism seemed barely to have touched her at all. Her deeply religious nature, her introversion reinforced by the isolation of partial deafness and the desire to please fitted in perfectly with the moral temperament of the time. In 1842, the Revd. Charles Kingsley(35), who, like many of the Wedgwood's' other Evangelical friends, had repudiated Hell, wrote to his future wife:

> There are two ways of looking at every occurence - a bright and a dark side. Two modes of action - Which is most worthy of a rational being, a Christian and a friend? It is absurd, as a rational being, to torture oneself unnecessarily. It is inconsistent to see God's wrath, rather than His Mercy in everything... Never begin to look darkly at a subject, without checking yourself and saying, "Is there not a bright side to this? Has not God promised the bright side to me? Is not my happiness in my own power? Do I not know that I am ruining my mind and endangering the happiness of those I love - by looking at the wrong side?"(36)

As a child Snow did indeed try to be cheerful and always look on the bright side. When she became aware of her deafness, how it made her different from the other children and how she made her adjustment to this handicap have not been preserved in any of the remaining

correspondence, if indeed it was ever the subject of a letter. Perhaps the knowledge came to her gradually as she played with Bro in the Nursery; perhaps her parents, her Nurse Mussums or her governess Lucy Bennett tried to explain her situation to her, though this seems unlikely as her adolescent letters contain numerous and sometimes bitter references to her parents taking no notice of her deafness, and her shame at later finding that she had misunderstood their wishes, thereby appearing stupid or else provoking parental irritation. But however she came to the realization of her disability and her acceptance of its permanence in her life, it was a lasting sorrow and a frequent embarrassment to her. Intellectually she was imaginative and observant, finding a comfort in the solitary pursuits of reading, writing and drawing. Emotionally she felt left out, insecure and inferior, but, having too proud a nature to admit dependence and determined to appear cheerful, she acquired a self-reliance coupled with an over-developed sense of duty.

In the summer of 1844, a year after her grandfather's death, Snow and her brothers and sister Effie spent the summer at Maer while their governess, Lucy Bennett, remained in London tutoring the son and daughter of the artist George Richmond.(37) By this time Snow had not only acquired her life-long passion for letter-writing but had also developed an interest in languages. To one of her letters, Miss Bennett replied:

> Many thanks for your note My dear little Snow. It is not easy to understand the time at which some of the events there mentioned have happened or may happen, because you have not limited your verbs to the rules prescribed for them in the french grammar. I am glad you wrote to me in french & only advise you to read over your next letter before you send it which I hope will be very soon.(38)

Fanny and Hensleigh were both advanced and liberal in their attitudes toward education. The studies of their sons and daughters had been the same until the time (1843) when Bro was sent off to

school. If the handicap of being born deaf came upon Snow slowly, the disadvantage of being born female arrived abruptly. To be left behind was a traumatic experience for her, for deep down inside her, she, as well as the adults around her, knew that she was far cleverer than Bro.

Harriet Martineau was particularly aware of the difficulties of sensitive little girls and wrote to Fanny:

> ... Is Snow very anxious for him (Bro)? I know what that is. O! what I suffered for James when he went to grammar school at Norwich! I trust (but it is a case in which I never could be sure) that she will not have to endure what most sisters have to go through from the small boy shame at sisters. Few boys are strong enough to eschew that weakness. But perhaps circumstances may, in Bro's case, save him and Snow from the temptation and the misery.(39)

Clearly Snow was now bored with lessons in the Nursery, where the younger children were always so noisy and active. She did not enjoy needlepoint or embroidery, and her deafness made singing or playing a musical instrument out of the question. Fanny was busy with her charities and with the younger children, and she was pregnant again. Hensleigh, who had more leisure with his undemanding position as Registrar of Cabs, was more interested in studying the etymology of words than in teaching his daughter ancient languages or history. Much of Snow's time was spent with her Aunt Rich who took her to church, read sermons to her and listened to Snow's recitations of memorized Biblical verses.

In February of 1844, Hensleigh and Fanny's sixth child Hope Elizabeth was born. "So you deprecate the idea of a 4th boy. I am glad therefore you have had a girl,"(40) Harriet Martineau declared bluntly. After the birth the other Wedgwood children were packed off to Down where Uncle Charles and Aunt Emma also had a four month old baby girl, Henrietta. "I was delighted to hear the news Snow brought & that it was a little girl," Emma wrote more tactfully than Harriet. "Effie and

the two little ones (Annie Darwin, aged 3, and Alfred Allen Wedgwood, nearly 2) are supremely happy & much less trouble than if she (baby Henrietta) was not here as they are more eager to play about & go after their own concerns & Snow reads her book & looks comfortable & has a bit of play with them now & then so I do hope you will leave them till they begin to wish for home."(41)

Snow's precociousness and intellect impressed her parents' friends and particularly her Darwin uncles. Both Ras and Charles took a particular interest in her, giving her books to read and then discussing them with her. But this special attention only distanced her further from her brothers and sisters and her less favoured cousins.

In April of 1846 she was visiting her Staffordshire relations and wrote to her mother from Etruria Hall:

> Dearest Mama I will write twice more to you before I bid farewell (for the present) to the delight of writing in peace. I feel in a humour to write on for hours tonight. All is very quiet, the only sound being three pens, viz. Aunt Fanny's, Uncle F's & mine. Godfrey is making little paper figures... Mrs. Jones(42) has been sitting over the fire for two hours talking with us all about Maer. She was telling us all sorts of things about Papa & my uncles. Papa was very dull when Uncle H. went to school and used to console himself by reading Pilgrim's Progress to her... Uncle H. was very crooked. He was (sic) a very nice disposition and came all straight after a time, but he was very crooked! Her admiration was much excited by some buff & white plaid frocks which you & Uncle Robert wore on yr return from India. 'Our children was always very nice, you know, and very clean but not so nice as them frocks!' We have gone over all of you I verily believe, for one generation. 'It all feels like a dream now' she said as she was going. I could not help thinking of the time when I shd look back on so many whom I had known passed away from the earth, and how little important all my affairs.(43)

"How little important all my affairs" was something of her adolescent mood then, which didn't seem to her father and her Uncle Ras a suitable mood for a thirteen year old soon expected to take a respected position in society.

With the encouragement of Harriet Martineau's brother the Revd. James Martineau, a Unitarian minister who had converted the Hensleigh Wedgwoods from the Broad Church of the Clapham Sect back to the Unitarianism of Josiah Wedgwood I, Snow was sent to a girl's finishing school in Liverpool, which was run by another Martineau sister, Rachel. At about the same time Harriet had experienced her miraculous recovery from her illness through mesmerism and wrote to Fanny on 3 August 1846:

> I often send my love to Snow under her decorous name of Julia. I shall soon see her childish face, - and her little hands fumbling for the button on the white fur trimming of her grey cloth pelisse. And then the large eyes when Mrs. Rich told of the munching cow in the middle of the night! I hope the old little Snow is not quite lost in the present Julia.(44)

At Miss Martineau's school Snow made friends with Blanche and Bertha Smith, the daughters of Samuel Smith, who was an uncle of Florence Nightingale's. In spite of her hearing difficulties, she participated in all of the activities of the school, and Harriet reported to Fanny:

> I first saw Snow last Friday at the dancing lesson. She had a sudden bad cold (now gone) and looked like all the rest, very desperately solemn when going through her evolutions. My sister told me I could no more judge of the ten faces by that hour than at church, - they are so intent on their business, and the intentness looks so droll in contrast with their frolicsome moments! - On Sunday I dined there and found your dear child very well and cheerful. I hope to have her for a walk one day this week. That will be the way to have some talk with her, which cannot be got with any freedom in a room full of people.(45)

Finishing schools like Miss Martineau's were more interested in giving their wealthy pupils stylish manners than sound learning, and the Wedgwoods considered one year of such instruction sufficient for their daughter. Snow returned home with three more years to while away by sewing, embroidering, sketching and reading before she could make her debut into London society and before she could be included in the first class of the first Ladies College, Bedford Square, which

was being founded by Mrs. Elizabeth Reid[46] with the assistance of Hensleigh, Erasmus and Thomas Henry Farrer[47] as the first trustees. This was an exciting and daring venture, though one which drew sneers from twelve-year-old Mack, cosy in his all-male circle at Rugby and confident of his acceptance at Cambridge. There were so many more opportunities for him than for Snow, who must now have begun to understand what Jane Carlyle had meant when she warned that as a tall woman "how very little you can get done of what you would like to do."

Chapter 3

People Who Count (1846-1854)

> "There is a certain amount of accident in the development of genius; kindly influences may breathe on the plant in spring, and the rich promise may be belied by a withered aspect in autumn, but it may be that under the best conditions the fruit would have been worth more than the blossom."
>
> Julia Wedgwood
> Nineteenth Century Essays

Snow's grandmother Bessy Wedgwood died peacefully in her sleep on 31 March 1846, finally released in her eighty-third year from the dreamy, dozing state which had been her existence for nearly a decade. Her four sons and their families; her unmarried daughter Elizabeth; her two married daughters and their families; her three surviving sisters, the widow Jessie Sismondi and the spinsters Emma and Fanny Allen; her only surviving sister-in-law Sarah Wedgwood and her only surviving brother-in-law Dr. Robert Darwin, then aged eighty, all came to Maer for the funeral service, read by her nephew the Revd. Allen Wedgwood. Bessy was buried beside her husband in the little Maer churchyard.

With her death an era ended in the Wedgwood family history. This was not only apparent but also painfully sad to thirteen-year-old Snow, who looked upon her grandmother's death as an ending to her own childhood as well. She and her cousin Godfrey, the two eldest grandchildren, felt the poignancy of the passing and the uncertainty of the future with a fearful timidity, which was ignored by their elders and unappreciated by the younger children.

For a number of years the Wedgwood Pottery had been in an unsound state, partly through national economic depression and agitation for industrial reform, and partly through family indifference and inept management. In 1844, Godfrey's parents, the Frank Wedgwoods, left

Etruria Hall and moved to a house in Barlaston, which they built and named the Upper House. It was sparse and plain and utilitarian without any of the graciousness or refinement of Etruria Hall. Frank, then the only member of the family left in the management of the Pottery, after the resignation of his brother Joe in 1842 and the death of his father in 1843, put up for auction the entire Etruria estate, the village, the Hall, the Pottery, various works of art and all of the pastures. The Hall and some of the pastures were sold to the Shelton Iron, Steel & Coal Company. The rest, including the Pottery, failed to meet its reserve. Having little choice left in the matter, Frank borrowed £15,000 from a banker named Robert Brown with whom he drew up a partnership agreement that was to last twenty-two years.

Fortunately the Pottery was not the sole income for the Wedgwood family. The Darwins were independently wealthy and had substantial investments in property and in stocks, other than the Wedgwood Pottery. The Allens had substantial investments in banking and coal mining, and many of the canal stocks which had been bought by Josiah Wedgwood I nearly a century earlier had been transferred to railway shares. The Wedgwoods also owned considerable farm property.

Still, Maer Hall, like Etruria Hall two years earlier, was too large and costly in upkeep for Elizabeth and the Langtons to continue living there. None of the four brothers wanted to live there any more than they had wanted to go into the pottery business. Maer Hall and the entire estate was sold by private treaty to the Davenport family, who for generations had been friends and rivals of the Wedgwoods in the pottery business.

Snow's great aunt Sarah Wedgwood, the only surviving child of Josiah Wedgwood I, moved to Petleys, a small house in Kent near Charles and Emma, her favourite niece. Elizabeth Wedgwood moved with Charles and Charlotte Langton to Hartfield Grove in Sussex, and the Harry Wedgwoods moved to Woking. The only Wedgwoods left in Staffordshire

were the Frank Wedgwoods, living in their far from grand house which Snow disliked visiting because "it is not at all a house in which there is interesting conversation, nor are there many books, and it is almost always freezing cold with Uncle Frank too penny-pinching to allow the fires lit when one wants them."(1)

The happy summers at Maer, surrounded by lots of uncles and aunts and cousins were over. When Godfrey confided to Snow, with resignation, that he supposed it would be his fate some day to manage the Pottery, she replied that that was quite unfair since he was just as clever as Mack, and nobody expected Mack to waste his talents in trade.

In later years Snow was to view with romantic nostalgia her childhood years and the youth of her parents and their friends and relatives at Maer. Nearly thirty years after her grandmother's death she wrote to Ellen Tollett:

> Do you suppose one wd always feel in looking over the letters of a past generation as if there were more rightness then? Is that the blue on the distant hills? I do not think it is only that - there seems to me in that Maer & Betley circle to have been a sort of affectionate light-heartedness that I have never seen among my contemporaries, & I am sure our letters will give no hint of such a thing.(2)

Time and distance soften most recollections, and the experiences of earlier generations usually seem more romantic than the events of one's own life. Still, it is probably true that, in general, the country life of the early half of the nineteenth century was more affectionate and light-hearted than the urban life of the latter half of the nineteenth century. Though Snow spent much of her time visiting friends and relations in the country, she was definitely a child of the city.

* * * * *

The year 1846, which saw the end of the era at Maer, also saw the beginning of a new era in London for Snow and her family. The

Hensleigh Wedgwoods moved to a large and grand house in Regent's Park with the fashionable address of 17 Cumberland Terrace, where they remained for the next fifteen years. Aunt Rich of course moved with them. They were now able to maintain nine servants and two carriages. With the undemanding position of Registrar of Cabs, Hensleigh was able to pursue his study of etymology and take on several directorships and trusteeships, including that of University College, London. In this capacity, he proposed his friend Francis W. Newman[3] then living in Manchester, for Professorship of Latin, which Newman obtained and kept for the next twenty years.

Another change of position which caused great excitement and some controversy within the family was the appointment of Robert Mackintosh to the post of Governor of Antigua. Fanny and Hensleigh, Mary Rich and the Darwins were pleased that he should be offered such a prestigious, and apparently undemanding, Government post, but Robert's American in-laws were not pleased. Robert's wife Molly had delicate health and had suffered complications following the birth of their two children. The Appleton family, and in particular Molly's sister Fanny, who had married the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, felt that the tropical climate in Antigua would be unhealthy for both Molly and the children. Robert, however, accepted the position, and rather unsatisfactory arrangements were made for Molly and the children to spend three months of the year in Antigua, when the climate was best, and the rest of the time in Boston, where Robert would manage to come for at least one lengthy visit a year.

Visiting was as much a part of upper-class Victorian life as letter writing, and the new house at Cumberland Terrace had plenty of rooms for visitors. Young ladies in particular, since their brothers were at boarding school or University, had little to amuse themselves apart from visiting. And the habit of visiting naturally encouraged a proliferation of letters through the temporary separation of friends

and relatives.

Snow frequently wrote or began letters while waiting in railway stations or while sitting in drawing room corners when there were so many members of the family present and "so many conversations taking place all at once that I cannot hear anyone distinctly."(4) There were many occasions when she wrote in the drawing rooms of Cumberland Terrace, Down or Barlaston, for she never wanted to appear standoffish or unsociable.

Her annual round of visits, which took up over six months of the year and were divided into spring, summer and autumn seasons, began when she was fourteen. She was always accompanied by her maid Clarke, and they occasionally travelled with some of her aunts or with her Uncle Ras. Her family visits, which lasted one to three weeks, were to her Allen great aunts and cousins in Wales, to her Uncle Charles Darwin's family and to her Aunt Elizabeth Wedgwood in Kent, to her Aunt Mary Rich (during the years when she was spending her summers with Lady Inglis) in Bedfordshire, to her Erskine aunt and cousins in Scotland, to her Darwin cousins in Shropshire, to her Uncle Harry Wedgwood's family in Woking, to her Uncle Josiah Wedgwood III's family at Leith Hill Place in Surrey and to her Uncle Frank Wedgwood's family at Barlaston in Staffordshire.

Travelling was never a pleasant experience for Snow. The confusion and noise of the railway stations exacerbated her hearing difficulties and upset her. On one occasion, as she was leaving the Frank Wedgwoods in Barlaston and going to Wales, she had an unpleasant episode in the station at Stoke-on-Trent, which she described in a letter to Effie.

> It was difficult to get seats & crowded. Clarke and I got separated by the scrimage & one woman was quite disagreeable to me, but a man took my part as far as I cd understand - it makes me very nervous when people are rude, not hearing what they are saying...(5)

On one of her visits to her Uncle Charles and Aunt Emma, she wrote

again to Effie: "I always feel that Down is on the whole a happy home, in spite of all the dreariness of that atmosphere of ill health, which is in some ways worse than ill health itself - the constant thought about bodily ailments that follows & precedes them & so almost turns bodily illness into mental."(6)

At the age of sixteen Snow was a shy, gifted, hyper-sensitive girl who suffered more than most during the awkward period when she was no longer a girl and not yet a woman. Though she was introverted and spent much of her time reading and drawing -(Ruskin,(7) who was a frequent guest at Cumberland Terrace, praised her work and encouraged her to study water colours)- Snow's active and emotional life centred around her immediate family. Part of the reason that she disliked visiting was that it took her away from Cumberland Terrace, and she felt the separation from her parents parted them in affection as well. She told Effie:

> I know how when one has been away from home for a long time one imagines things there so much brighter and smoother than they are, or at least one imagines they will be henceforward...(8)

Over the next decade or so, there probably was some justification for Snow's feeling that she was unappreciated by her parents. Mack, Ernest and Effie were all far less intense and serious, possessing a natural confidence which Snow lacked. Ernest enjoyed teasing his sisters, and Effie was the favourite of both her father and her Uncle Ras because she was pretty, witty and high-spirited. She sang hymns and ballads "like an angel" and yet by the time she was fifteen she could take on practically any man of any age in debate over politics or philosophy - and probably win. To most men Effie seemed attractively challenging and inviting, whereas Snow appeared intellectually formidable, nervous and slightly forbidding. Physically, however, she was the exact opposite of the character impression she created. She was tiny, plump and delicate, like the Allens, with dainty hands and feet. Her hair

was dark and straight, parted neatly in the middle and brushed down smoothly to frame a soft rounded face. Her eyes were grey and deep-set beneath a high forehead and overhanging brows, reminiscent of her Wedgwood forbears, whereas her mouth with its pouting, almost dissolute lower lip recalled her Mackintosh ancestry. Her prominent chin was also characteristic of the Wedgwood side of the family, and like Queen Victoria she was only four feet ten inches tall and weighed ninety-eight pounds. Her only unattractive feature was her skin, which was blotched in adolescence and subject to rashes and blemishes throughout her life. Effie and Hope, on the other hand, both had clear, fair skins, blonde curly hair, and were tall, slender and athletic.

But if Snow resented her parent's lack of attention or felt superceded in their affections by her younger sisters, she had no cause for pique or rancour at their attitudes towards Women's Rights or towards her own education. In a time when there was prejudice against any serious education for women, both Hensleigh and Fanny were extremely advanced in their thinking. More importantly, they put into practice the ideas that they held philosophically.

The first small university in England for higher education for women, Bedford College, was founded in October 1849 by Elizabeth Reid. Snow, then sixteen, was enrolled as one of the first pupils. Closely connected with University College, London, and supported by the Unitarian Church with an endowment of £1,500, the first trustees were Hensleigh Wedgwood, Erasmus Alvey Darwin and Thomas Henry Farrer. Hensleigh was also listed as Chairman of the General Committee, and Fanny was a member of the Ladies Committee which was entrusted with "all arrangements which have reference to the comfort and convenience of the Pupils."[9] Also on the Ladies Committee were Florence Nightingale's aunt Julia Smith and Lady Romilly. The first four professors appointed were: Revd. J.S. Brewer,[10] W.B. Carpenter,[11] Francis W. Newman and Revd. A.J. Scott.

The idea of Bedford College took shape after the opening in March of 1848 of Queen's College, Harley Street, sponsored by the Established Church, mainly the Broad Church section, and originally planned to educate and examine governesses. In the early years Mrs. Reid organized courses and lectures and helped to purchase a house in Bedford Square for the non-sectarian college with a curriculum that included history and moral philosophy as well as languages ancient and modern, literature and the arts.

While Hensleigh and Farrer did not look upon their positions as Trustees as involving them in any active part of the administration, wishing instead to be merely treasurers "with discretion concerning the application of the fund," both Ras and Fanny involved themselves with the pupils, the administrators, the professors and Mrs. Reid.

A feminist and friend of Harriet Martineau's, Mrs. Reid possessed a strong and often vociferous determination, forever insisting "we shall never have better Men until men have better Mothers."(12) Even the most advanced Victorians were unable to disassociate the aims of women from the needs of men. The ideal was Motherhood; second best was a competent governess.

Snow attended lectures in Logic by Scott and enrolled in Newman's course in geometry, as did George Eliot four years later. Both teachers were profound influences on Snow, and she maintained a close friendship with Scott until his death in 1866, describing their relationship as "one of the deepest & most fruitful friendships of my life. No other penetrated to such depths & touched on so many varied & diverse points of interest."(13) She later recalled that after expressing some youthful morbid feeling she was experiencing at the time, Scott quoted to her a Greek passage from Aristotle, which translates: "They who seek a reason for everything leave no reason for anything."(14)

Her recollections of Newman at that time are in a different mood

and

> ... bring back the atmosphere of ardent hope & keen desire which surrounded us in the years after 1848. He took part in the founding of Bedford College and I there drank in his teaching on Logic, Mathematics, & Political Economy, but the position of teacher brought out some quaint limitations in his own character, & I remember my sympathetic embarrassment at hearing him tell one of the class not to blush when he spoke to her. The same amusing naivete led him once to proffer advice on elocution to Fanny Kemble, with reference to her public readings, her scornful reception of his suggestions much surprising him; and also created much amusement once when in telling that he had been asked in the street "Who's your hatter (a slang expression of contempt for one's head gear) he concluded "I really could not remember at the moment what was the address of my hatter."(15)

In 1848 Hensleigh published an essay "On the Development of Understanding,"[16] which aroused considerable interest and some controversy. Harriet Martineau's close friend Henry Atkinson dissented from the conclusion of Free Will, but among the many admirers of the work were Mary Somerville[17] and her physician husband who was at the time posted at the Royal Hospital Chelsea. The Somervilles were then frequent visitors at Cumberland Terrace, as were Sir Robert and Lady Inglis, Thomas and Jane Carlyle, Arthur H. Clough (who later married Snow's school friend Bertha Smith), Matthew Arnold, Frederick Denison Maurice and his wife, John Ruskin and his wife (Effie Gray who later left him for ~~eloped with~~ the painter John Everett Millais), John Stuart Mill and Mrs Harriet Taylor, Elizabeth Gaskell on her visits to London from Manchester, the old banker poet Samuel Rogers and Richard Holt Hutton, who was later to become editor of the Spectator, and who early on perceived Snow's literary talents.

The year 1848 also saw Harriet Martineau's miraculous recovery through mesmerism from what was believed to be an incurable illness. This spectacular event attracted public attention and much debate.

Jessie Sismondi, then widowed and living with her two unmarried sisters in Wales, wrote to her niece Fanny, who had written to her a full description of the cure as Harriet had reported it to her:

> Thank you a thousand times. I am not however advanced in faith by it, I always believed there was something in it, the only question was how much? for clairvoyance. I have made no progress. I was ready to believe, I am now. It is very remarkable that the mesmeric sleep should be bodily so profound as to defy the knife and all its horrors and mentally so light as to preserve shadows of the waking thoughts, and to hear and give answers to questions so that the mind seems broad awake. Does mesmerism then separate Soul and body as it were? That Miss M. should hear well in her sleep, and not awake is very wonderful. How much there is to study and meditate upon without going further than the threshold! I should be very much obliged if you would send by John(18) the last number of the Peoples' Journal.(19)

Fanny Wedgwood believed implicitly in her friend Harriet's complete supernatural recovery, though Hensleigh, in later years an enthusiastic Spiritualist, was then a somewhat contemptuous unbeliever. Shortly after the controversy had reached its peak, Snow had an invitation to visit Harriet at Ambleside, which she eagerly accepted. Unfortunately no evidence is preserved as to whether Snow came to believe Harriet's cure was the result of mesmerism, a matter of misdiagnosis or the aftermath of natural healing. Whatever the circumstance, Harriet was indeed cured; and she and Snow, both usually discomfited by deafness, found conversation easy and had many passionate discussions on theology, literature, politics and social reform. Though Harriet ordinarily used an ear trumpet, apparently it was unnecessary with Snow, for the two women were able to communicate through lip reading.

During this happy visit to Ambleside, Harriet took Snow to call on the ageing Poet Laureate Wordsworth at Rydal Mount. For someone of Snow's generation and temperament, Wordsworth was old-fashioned. Personally she found him conceited and disagreeable. As the two women

were about to leave and were waiting for their carriage, a chair drew up at the front door, bearing the shrunken figure of the invalid Dorothy Wordsworth, returned from her daily excursion. Upon hearing Snow's name, the old woman seized her by the arm and inquired eagerly: "From whom are you spawn?"

Startled and repelled by the old woman's touch, Snow replied haughtily: "My father is Hensleigh Wedgwood."

Dorothy Wordsworth's eyes were wild, full of fire and light, but her mind was vague and wandering. "Hensleigh Wedgwood?" she murmured. "I know of no Hensleigh Wedgwood. Do you know Thomas Wedgwood?" She then lapsed into a eulogy of Tom Wedgwood[20] as if his death had occurred yesterday instead of nearly half a century before. Snow had barely heard of her great-uncle, but she made a mental note to ask her father more about him. The impression left on her mind by this ailing, half-mad old woman was far more powerful and illuminating than the pompous image of the old Poet Laureate, who died shortly thereafter.

As Snow's world broadened in an intellectual way, it also did so in a social way that was complementary. In December of 1849 she went to a dinner party given by Sir Robert and Lady Inglis in Bedford Square where Thomas Macaulay, who also had been a part of the old Clapham Sect, was a guest "on which occasion I and Erasmus Darwin were the audience to one of his monologues, as serious and deliberate as if he were addressing the cream of society."[21]

That she and her family actually <u>were</u> the cream of society was something Snow never seemed to grasp, though most of her brothers, sisters and cousins accepted it quite naturally and sometimes, regrettably, quite arrogantly. For example, when Ernest was at Rugby, he wrote to Snow: "There is one remark I have to make to you and that is that I am <u>not</u> a bricklayer and therefore you will be pleased to put the 'Esq.' after my patronymic, I observe you are the only one of the family that does not."[22]

* * * * *

Snow's formal "coming out" in society took place in September of 1850 in Scotland where she had been taken by her Aunt Rich to visit her Erskine relatives. "Coming out" in Scotland before being presented to the "cream of society" in London as an eligible young lady was not unusual. (Thackeray's daughter Minnie, later to become the wife of Leslie Stephen, did the same in 1856.) Presumably such social blunders as awkward or naive young ladies were likely to commit were more easily overlooked in Scotland than in London. Snow made her debut at Inverness with her cousins Fanny and Emma Erskine, the daughters of Maitland Mackintosh, sister of Mary Rich and half-sister to Snow's mother Fanny. On 22 September 1850 Snow wrote to her mother a twelve page letter describing all the social activities:

> Well dear Mama, we have had 2 most delightful balls - & are now, as you may imagine, pretty nearly dead... I see Aunt Rich is also writing to you, I have no doubt with a minute description of our apparel, so I need say nothing on that head. I have no doubt yr first anxiety is to know what species of gaucherie I committed to commemorate my first appearance in public as Bro calls it. - I am not conscious of any very glaring one, except taking my seat in the places of honour after the grandees had entered, where I hope I conducted myself with dignity. - I wished Papa had been there, he wd have been in love with ½ a dozen young ladies in no time - you never saw such a collection of pretty women, every other one was a beauty, as one of F's partners remarked, "& not a plain woman in the room" which however was not quite true: ... Fanny looked very pretty, & was in the greatest requisition, handed over from one partner to another without any cessation, & was engaged 3 or 4 deep when we left the rooms at 3½. - I was enjoying myself above everything, & figured away in a Hoolihan with that ridiculous creature Raymore, until to my horror I felt my pearls dancing about my neck - but there was no stopping, so I had to finish the reel with my hair in a wild state very suitable to the dance. Fanny danced every dance... she seemed to enjoy her ball, & I was delighted to see her in such good spirits. - Now I want to ask you about money. Ought I not to pay my gentleman my supper ticket? - It is very awkward. Aunt Rich says it wd be a direct insult, but she has such magnificent ideas, & yet I don't much like saying

> "Mr. Tytler, what do I owe you for 2 glasses of champagne?" - particularly as I shan't see him for a week. Raymore amuses me exceedingly. I am looking forward very much to my visit there. He came up & introduced himself to me very good naturedly. - Now I won't say another word of the ball, for I shall have to describe it so many times... If you in the least think that I had better be back by the beginning of October, I cd easily look out for an escort to Edinburgh, & once there cd very easily get to London. - Tell me if you think this wd be better. - I have been enjoying myself very much, but I don't know if I haven't had enough idleness... Aunt R has had a long letter from Aunt Fanny... with a great deal of indignation at the "foolish, unreasonable almost immoral letters of T.A.(23) and Mrs. Longfellow to Aunt Molly against the Antigua journey. She had evidently gone on to say something very fiery, for she has cut a little bit out... as I have so large an enclosure, I will bring my letter to a conclusion. - I reflect with a certain degree of satisfaction now that every step we take will be southward, & that we will probably be in Edinburgh in a month's time. - Goodbye, dear Mama, ever yr affec. F.J. Wedgwood.(24)

Such enthusiasms and anxieties seem like the preoccupations of an ordinary young girl making her debut at any time in any place, yet several references stand out as distinctive to Snow's personality. The concern to please her mother reflected in her offer to come home early if her mother wishes and the reassurance to her mother that, although she is enjoying herself, she is looking forward to returning southward (home) seem rather extreme devotions to duty even for a conscientious Victorian daughter. There is also a hint of guilt at having enjoyed society while experiencing so much "idleness" when of course she could be doing something useful. While young ladies of Snow's class and acquaintance were taught to please and to enjoy society, Snow clearly felt the need to be useful to such an extent that it became an obsession equated with goodness, which she herself later recognized as hypocrisy.

The mention of wishing for her father because he would be in love with half a dozen young ladies, immediately followed by how pretty they all were - "Not a plain woman in the room, which however was not

quite true" (meaning herself) - suggests a desire to please her father while at the same time feeling herself inadequate. She knows that pretty young ladies delight her father and that she is not very pretty. The best she can offer him is the society of her contemporaries and in particular, that of her popular cousin Fanny, toward whom she seems to feel not the slightest envy. Negative or ambivalent feelings are directed toward a young man, Raymore, whom she first describes as "a ridiculous creature" and then only a few sentences later praises and declares herself "very much looking forward to my visit there" (his family home). By first denigrating the young man to her mother, she implies that his attentions, though not entirely unwelcome, are not particularly important. To avoid the pain of masculine rejection, which, rightly or wrongly, she felt she had got from both her father and her brother Mack, she anticipates rejection in order not to be disappointed or hurt. Because she cannot believe herself to be pleasing to a man, she rejects the man first - a self-defeating ploy which was to be repeated time and time again throughout her life.

From a perspective of over a century and a quarter later, Snow does not appear to be as unattractive as she believed herself to be. Solemnly staring out from an oval, gold-framed daguerrotype taken a few years after her debut, she seems to embody virtues most admired by the Victorians - moral earnestness, neatness, an agreeable feminine delicacy and a strict conformity to the posture and fashions of the period. The face is a combined study of intellectuality and sensuality. From the standpoint of a future marriage, her family's wealth, name, social position, intellectual associations and political connections would have attracted a number of suitable gentlemen.

As mentioned earlier, however, the Wedgwoods for three generations had tended to marry among their own kin, and, if Snow had thought about it, as undoubtedly she had, for she was then nearly eighteen, she would have realized that her only choice within the family was

Godfrey. And, in many ways, Godfrey had already replaced Bro or Mack as Snow's friend and confidante, for Mack had somewhat lost interest in his sister when he went off to school, finding himself more interested in gentlemanly sports like hunting and shooting and in studying the classics, which were intellectually, of course, beyond the capacities of girls.

Godfrey, like Snow, was modest and shy in crowds, particularly of strangers, and more and more they clung together at parties. Mack and Ernest and Willie Darwin all thought Godfrey was as stodgy and strait-laced as his stilted and slightly stupid sister Amy. This disparagement infuriated Snow, who persistently defended Godfrey and who informed her Uncle Frank that it was mean of him to confine Godfrey to "that nasty old pot shop" when he was every bit as clever as Mack, who had just entered Christ's College, Cambridge.

Ernest and his cousin Willie Darwin (who had outgrown his baby name of Doddy) were at Rugby together and the closest of friends. With some prodding from Hensleigh and Emma, Frank did allow Godfrey to go to the University of Edinburgh for one year, which was during the year of Snow's London debut in 1851. From Edinburgh Godfrey wrote to Snow that finally he himself had made the decision to go into the Pottery and was now enthusiastic about it, having at last abandoned some of their youthful fantasies, played out in the gardens at Maer and at Etruria Hall.

> I have long entertained hopes that the plan of a general emigration of all the Wedgwoods, Darwins, Mackintoshes & so on would be put into execution. It would be delightful to form a small republic of one's own on some south sea island & to live upon the fruits of the earth & sports without wasting all one's time in a dingy office. I am afraid however that the realisation of our plans are much farther off than even the island itself.(25)

When Snow went to Scotland for her coming out, she and her two Erskine cousins were accompanied by their Aunt Rich, who was a stern

and watchful chaperone. While Aunt Rich accompanied her three young nieces to balls and week-end house parties, she also saw that their minds were exposed to the Evangelical minister Thomas Erskine who was living at Linlathen near Dundee with his widowed sister Christian Stirling. Though Thomas Erskine was distantly related to Mary Rich's brother-in-law William Erskine, the first meeting between Thomas Erskine and Mary Rich appears to have been arranged some twenty years earlier by Madame de Staël's daughter Albertine, the Duchesse de Broglie, who was a disciple of Erskine's and a member of what later became known as the Linlathen circle.

At the time, this visit to Linlathen appeared to have made little impact on the seventeen year old Snow, whose letters were filled with details of parties rather than sermons; yet, over a quarter of a century later, Snow referred to that first journey to Linlathen as "altering the direction of my life."

In 1851, however, she was looking at herself as a woman for whom the most important decision of her life was: "To Marry - or - Not to Marry!" And the more she looked at herself, the more dissatisfied and uncertain she became.

> I take sudden fits of dislike to being constantly in company, as I am now - I don't think it is at all my element. I am sure I am always doing awkward things. I shall never go out as soon as I get home - not that I don't enjoy seeing new people, if I did not feel obliged to behave like a Christian now. I often deplore my extreme age and wish I cd sit down quietly and say nothing to anybody.(26)

Feeling as awkward and unworthy as she did, she soon discovered that champagne, or wine of any sort, soothed her anxieties more than anything else.

Though she had not as yet made her official debut in London Society, Snow had begun to go to parties, balls and soirées, chaperoned by her parents, her various aunts and uncles and occasionally by some of her parents' friends. In the company of Mrs. Gaskell she went to an

evening party at the Chevalier Bunsen's. He was then Prussian ambassador, and his wife was an old friend of the Wedgwoods. The chief attraction was neither the host nor the hostess but the glamorous and infamous Caroline Norton, whom Snow described:

> I had a good opportunity for observing her, as she sang one of her own compositions, a song bearing on her unhappy relations with her husband - a curious choice, but the oppression of a burning sense of wrong has many effects less unnatural than they seem. The trial for her divorce on account of her relations with Lord Melbourne was supported by evidence so absurdly trifling that Dickens caricatured it, in a carefully disguised form, in his Bardwell versus Pickwick. She appears in Meredith's Diana of the Crossways, where however the principal incident of her betraying the secret of the Cornlaw repeal is untrue. She retained much of her beauty in 1850 tho' a grown up son leaned on the piano as she sang, for I remember Mrs. Gaskell exclaiming as we drove away: "How very lovely Mrs. Norton is."(27)

When Fanny took the younger children on a holiday to Wales to visit their Allen cousins, Ras wrote to Fanny whom he affectionately called Missis, and even on occasion <u>my</u> Missis:

> Dear Missis
> ... I don't know if Snowie has told you that she has made the plunge & bought a pair of ears. I think they <u>very decidedly</u> help her, but she is rather doubtful herself & is shy about them. I persuaded her to take them to the Spottiswoodes(28) last night but she said she took them off as they rather confused her with a drumming and I dare say they require practice to turn them in the right direction. They are very inconspicuous as seen in front...(29)

Her deafness made being in large crowds of people an intimidating experience. To conceal her fear of misunderstanding what was being said to her, and consequently making some embarrassingly inappropriate response, she pretended to despise balls as superficial and silly. Her defence was in laughing at the foolishness of others before they could laugh at her.

Upon her return to London from Scotland, she did not, however, stick to her plan of refusing all ball invitations. In 1852, she wrote to Mack, who was then at Christ's College, Cambridge:

> I went to a ball at Mrs. Taggerts. It was very pleasant and we danced a great deal. In the intervals of dancing I amused myself with admiring Millais (the Pre-Raphaelite painter) who was there. He is the most lovely man I ever saw but he looked rather a fine gentleman. - I had such a succession of idiots for partners that I had quite enough amusement laughing at them...(30)

Always in her descriptions of parties there were the tendencies to admire from afar some magnificent man of whom she thought herself unworthy, then to disparage any man who approached her, almost as if a man who found her desirable couldn't be very desirable himself.

At least during part of the London social season, Snow had the sympathetic company of Godfrey whose parents thought he might as well gain a little social polish, as well as be on the look-out for a wife, since there were so few acceptable families in the Potteries. Highly sensitive and self-deprecating, Godfrey shared with Snow a feeling of awkwardness at parties and confided to her:

> I have my doubts as to the policy of counting on dancing as amusement where one is an utter stranger. I never can manufacture conversation with the least ease... I mean that on asking a girl to dance where one is an utter stranger, one cannot help feeling that she w'd be much rather dancing with her friend Smith, who carries on an eye conversation with her across your back and so on.(31)

At the same time that Snow was attending balls and soirées and dinner parties and afternoon teas, she was continuing her classes at Bedford College, though, in those days, neither examinations nor degrees were given. The records of Bedford College show that in the Lent and Easter terms of 1849-50, Snow studied Moral Philosophy and paid a fee of £2.2.0. In the Michaelmas and Lent terms of 1850-51, she studied Mathematics, Elocution, Political Economy and Logic and paid a fee of £6.6.0. In the Michaelmas and Lent terms of 1851-1852 she studied Latin, Drawing, Astronomy and Geography and paid a fee of £7.17.6.(32)

In November of 1852 Snow went to Manchester to visit the Gaskells.

Elizabeth Gaskell was a close friend of Fanny's and had attended a school run by the Misses Byerley, great nieces of Josiah Wedgwood I. Mrs. Gaskell's husband, the Revd. William Gaskell, was a Unitarian minister and a friend of the Revd. A.J. Scott, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Bedford, who had so impressed Snow and who was a friend of her Aunt Rich's. By 1852 Mrs. Gaskell had published the novels Mary Barton, Cranford and Ruth and was working on a fourth, North and South, when Snow came to visit her two elder daughters Marianne and Meta. Only a few days after her arrival Snow became seriously ill with rheumatic fever. The Gaskells were alarmed and sent for Fanny and Hensleigh to come immediately. They arrived with Aunt Fanny Allen who had been visiting them in London. When it became apparent that Snow would recover, but that she would have to remain at Plymouth Grove for several weeks, her parents returned to London. Fanny Allen stayed on at Plymouth Grove to help the Gaskells nurse her. While she was convalescing, Snow received affectionate letters from both Godfrey and Mack and news of the marriage of Emily Batten, a young woman she had met at Linlathen and whose mother was a close friend of Aunt Rich's, to Russell Gurney.(33) Godfrey wrote that his parents had finally agreed that he could spend more time in London, partly on business and partly attending social and cultural functions. He told Snow that she had missed the Duke of Wellington's funeral but that she probably would not have enjoyed it much since she was not much of a sightseer.

Ernest saucily wrote to her: "If you admire Godfrey so much, let me remind you that the present year is divisible by the number 4 and that if you have on a red petticoat, your course is straight."(34)

While she was recovering over a period of two months, Mrs. Gaskell read to her and Marianne and Meta bits of her work in progress, North and South. Snow was greatly impressed not only by Mrs. Gaskell's words but by the visible, tangible evidence that here was a deeply

religious woman with a dutiful husband and loving daughters, managing a large house, doing good works among the poor - and writing successful novels as well! Why, then, could she not do the same?

Chapter 4

A Literary Life (1854-1863)

> "All writers, one way or another, depend ultimately on their own lives for the material of their books, but the manner in which each employs personal experience, interior or exterior, is very different."
>
> Julia Wedgwood
> Framleigh Hall

In the nineteenth century, whether one was male or female, the opportunity to be creative in the arts or in the sciences depended as much upon private income as upon individual genius. Without a private income, Snow's Uncle Charles Darwin could never have devoted himself to science; nor, without a private income, could Robert Browning have devoted his time to poetry, for which he received no payment at all for many years. Lack of a personal fortune no doubt prevented some talent from flourishing; but, conversely, many works of poetry, fiction and philosophy were published which served no purpose at all but merely allowed some affluent people to express themselves in print, thereby convincing themselves of their own importance.

Publishing a book of any sort was a fashionable thing to do. The appeal of writing novels, which had a lower intellectual status than biography or philosophy, was two-fold for Snow. Firstly, she did not believe herself capable of writing anything more ambitious; and, secondly, as is true of most fiction writers, there was a yearning to reach out and make contact with other people, to recognize the humanity in others and in herself and somehow to bring them together.

Most civilized people, and in particular people who are in some way different or isolated (as Snow was by her deafness), are insatiably curious about other people - who they are, what they do, how they think and, above all, why they think and feel and behave as

they do. Are others like oneself? Writers inevitably hypothesize about other people's behaviour, deciding if it corresponds with what the writer would do if he or she were found in that person's situation, or, indeed, if the writer actually were that person. In a sense it is a search for enlightenment on the part of the writer as much as for the reader.

To appreciate the fiction of another age one must accept its conventions and enter into its spirit. While there is no such thing as the typical Victorian novel, any more than there is the typical Victorian novelist, there are certain common factors among many of the novels written between 1830 and 1870. Very often they were published in three volumes; very often the author paused in the narrative to address the reader directly, expounding a bit of his or her philosophy about human nature and perhaps passing judgement on the behaviour of one or more of the particular characters. Frequently, whether the story ended happily or tragically, good miraculously triumphed over evil. More attention was given to descriptive detail and to setting of mood than is usually the case today.

Snow had begun outlining the story for her first novel in the autumn of 1855 when she returned to Manchester and took on the task of copying the Brontë letters for Elizabeth Gaskell, who was planning a biography of Charlotte Brontë. She acted as Mrs. Gaskell's secretary and research assistant, learning from her much about the craft of writing. For recreation she spent time with Meta Gaskell and with the A.J. Scotts, who had moved to Manchester when Scott became Principal of Owens College, where he also held the Chair of Moral Philosophy.

The title of the novel, begun in secret, was Framleigh Hall. Fearing ridicule and criticism from her parents and her brothers Mack and Ernest, she confided her literary ambitions only to her sister Effie and to her friend Mrs. Gaskell. She did not expect the family to

disapprove of her becoming a novelist, but she believed that if she wrote a novel it would have to be an excellent one, of which the family could be proud.

She finished a first draft of Framleigh Hall in less than a year, sending off sections to Effie to read and criticize. Effie's candour about her sister's writing, which she found "a bit long and tiresome," was unsettling. Snow began a second novel An Old Debt and somewhat hesitantly showed the first two chapters to Meta Gaskell, whose immediate response was enthusiastic approval. Snow then gave Meta the first part of Framleigh Hall and received more encouragement. When the firm of Hurst & Blackett offered to publish Framleigh Hall if she would make certain changes, Snow decided to do so and to publish under the pseudonym of Florence Dawson. Because she was frightened that her parents might see some of the letters from Hurst & Blackett, she rushed downstairs each morning to sort the post and place it on the hall table as the butler usually did.

The major change the publishers wanted in Framleigh Hall was that the villain Mortimer, rather than the hero Maurice, should die at the end. Such a change proved more difficult for Snow than it would have been for most moralistic writers, content with the simple but ever-popular theme of the triumph of good over evil. "I think the deathbed of a very bad man is too awful an idea to be brought into a novel," Snow confessed to Effie, "so I am working very hard at trying to reform him, but it will turn out something quite disgustingly mawkish and commonplace."(1)

Effie, who had gone abroad to Germany with her two elder brothers, was rather more interested in the good and evil that were done in the present world than in promises of a glorious existence in the life hereafter. Naturally she said so, making Snow all the more nervous. "I do wish you were here, for my dreadful anxiety is that now I shall not be able to keep it a secret from the elders," she wrote to Effie. "I

sh'd be miserable ever after if any of our people don't like it. I was rather depressed by the way you spoke about it, though you are such a rabid novel reader, & if you did not like it, how much more Mack and all our people who are so dreadfully critical - Oh dear! I have given myself up to be made a pincushion!"(2)

Apparently Effie did confide the secret to Hope, who inadvertently let it be known to Fanny, for a few months later, Snow, who was at Down, wrote to Effie:

> I am so relieved to find Mama does not know the title that I don't much care about her knowing the simple fact that I am trying my hand at this work. Are you quite <u>sure</u> she does not know the title? and how came she to say that about a book unless you had told her it was a book? All I care about is that when it is published she may not know it is mine, & then this recollection will soon slip out of her mind. This is such a good opportunity that I think I shall stay here till it is quite finished, which I hope & trust will be soon. When did you say that to Mama about my writing? I am so dreadfully sick of it I can't tell you, & I really think I shall enjoy some dry stiff reading after it.(3)

At the same time that Snow was writing her novel and living in her imaginary world, she was also obediently carrying on the family visiting and attending to the social activities expected of her. In 1854-55, Mack was travelling abroad; Ernest was at King's College, Cambridge; Alfred, whom the family affectionately called Tim, was sent to school at Shrewsbury, near the Darwin cousins, where it was hoped he would get on better than he had at Weybridge School. Hope, affectionately called Dot, was as bright and precocious in her studies as Tim was slow, and for the future she was enrolled in the new Grosvenor College in preference to Bedford, which, as the snobbish Ernest, who had been invited to shoot at Balmoral with the Royal Princes, said was "so much more aristocratic." Effie, who, like Snow, had attended Bedford, was making her debut in London, and this first social season drew sympathy from Snow who wrote to her from Shrewsbury:

> ... Oh, I would not for worlds live over the year that followed my return from Scotland - the disgust, the heart sickness, the despondency. - I do not think there is much danger of that for you, we are so different. - But if you ever feel any thing of it, if you feel, as I did, that an iron barrier has sprung up between you & your family, shutting out all hope of intercourse, of mutual help & comfort, - then remember, my dearest child, that the end of our life is not to be a smooth complacency... but to be brought to the sense of our dependence on God.(4)

During the holiday season of 1854-55 Aunt Rich went to Paris, and Snow went to visit Lady Inglis, writing to her Aunt Rich: "It is always a pleasure to me to be with anybody to whom one can imagine oneself any sort of amusement or use in any way - one goes to see so many people to whom one gives not the slightest pleasure and from whom one receives none."(5) To do the right thing, even for the wrong reason, to be good and selfless and do one's duty brought the sympathy and praise Snow craved. And having perceived the sham or dual nature of her motives, she came round full circle, believing herself to be as unworthy as if she had been defiant and disobedient.

In 1856 the family again went abroad, with the exception of Snow and Mack. Snow disliked travel and was anxious to work on her book, and Mack was not feeling well. Snow's work and her dislike of long journeys were finally put aside in the summer of 1857 when she was completing the revision of Framleigh Hall, and she went to Europe with the rest of the family, again with the exception of Mack. The plan was to go to France, Switzerland, Germany and Italy. But at La Tour, Alfred became ill with an ear infection. The others were impatient to get on - Hensleigh to a spa in Germany, Ernest to Italy and Effie to Switzerland. Hensleigh thought that the family could split up into two separate groups; Fanny argued that Effie and Hope were too young to travel alone. Alfred didn't want to go any farther. Finally Snow suggested that she stay and nurse Alfred, and when he was

better, they would join up with the others. But which others and where? The Wedgwood obstinacy was manifest among all these personalities, all of whom wanted their own way. Plans were changed and then changed again. Snow stayed two weeks at an inn at La Tour with the temperamental, fifteen-year-old Alfred who was not only ailing but also bored. Then the sister and brother went to Vevey to meet Fanny and Effie, arriving only to discover that Fanny and Effie were at Zermatt. "I don't think you or Mama realize that I hear nothing but what you and Mama tell me," Snow wrote to Effie, "all the general discussions, plans, I know nothing of."(6) The result was that Snow and Alfred returned to London while Fanny and Effie met up with the others in Italy.

Upon her return Snow wrote to Effie from Cumberland Terrace:

> I must add a line to this budget of Mack's to tell you of a piece of news which has excited me immensely - Meta is going to be married to Capt. Hill of the Madras Engineers. He is ordered out immediately & she writes in a great state of agitation. If she goes, she must go immediately & so I suppose I shall never see her again. I did not know till today how much I cared for her. I cannot tell you how sad it makes me to think we must break off all intercourse - for after 10 years when she comes back with a family it will be impossible to take up the broken thread... (7)

The candid and pragmatic Effie replied that she bet the engagement was just a passing fancy and that she doubted that Meta would ever marry anyone. She was right. In April of 1858, Meta wrote to Snow that she had broken her engagement to Captain Hill and was quite miserable, though her parents were quite relieved. Snow bet Effie that Meta would be married within two years, and Effie accepted the bet with a repetition of her conviction that Meta would never marry. Again Effie won the bet.

Marriage was very much a subject of discussion at this time, for Snow was twenty-five, Effie twenty and Hope sixteen. Both religious and

romantic, Snow yearned for both a happy marriage and a successful career as a novelist.

* * * * *

Framleigh Hall was published under the pseudonym Florence Dawson in January of 1858 by Hurst and Blackett in three volumes. It begins:

> Framleigh Hall was a large, irregular, rambling old house, chiefly of an Elizabethan character, with one portion of a still earlier date, and here a later addition, not too new, however, to be wanting in congruity with the rest, which time never fails to bestow... It looked upon a gay flower garden, laid out in the formal old English style, and shut in by the shrubbery - a side path leading to the terrace, from which a more extended view might be obtained. The principle sitting-room was characterized by the same picturesque irregularity as the exterior - a comfortable mixture of antique grandeur and modern luxury. One morning, about fifty years ago, a lady was seated at work in the deep bay window, which formed a favourite nook for all who liked a sunny corner for reading or working in the morning, and a dark hiding-place when the shutters were closed. She was neither young nor old, handsome nor plain - a quiet, ladylike little woman on the confines of youth, in whom few would have seen anything worthy of observation. She had sat there some time, when the door opened, and another lady entered, much younger and handsomer, but sufficiently like her to be at once recognized as her sister.(8)

It is not a bad opening for a first novel written by a twenty-five year old author. The story line, however, when summarized today, seems mawkish and contrived. The hero Maurice Delamere, a sensitive, non-aggressive boy at the beginning of the story is constantly in trouble because of telling lies; but he isn't really lying. Circumstances force him to do so because he is too noble ever to break a promise or to betray a confidence. Sir Arthur, his brusque, insensitive but well-meaning father, sends him to Eton where he is bullied mercilessly by an older, sadistic boy named Mortimer Grenville, who cheats on exams, and calls Maurice a coward for not fighting with him.

After leaving Eton both young men join the army and go off to the Napoleonic Wars, where Maurice's closest friend William, the Vicar's son, is killed, and where Maurice himself (mistaking the enemy for his own regiment because of his near-sightedness) is wounded and sent home. His friends and family think him a hero. After the war, and through his father's influence, Maurice is offered a job in the War Office which he turns down, partly because of feeling unsuited and partly because his old enemy Mortimer Grenville has accepted a post in the same office. His father is infuriated because he feels that his son has chosen an idle life rather than making a useful contribution to his country.

At a ball, Maurice meets Isabella, Mortimer's good but plain sister, who introduces him to Miss Eugenia Churchill, the orphan ward of Lady Grenville. Although she is engaged to marry Mortimer, Eugenia and Maurice immediately fall in love. "All this she knew; and she, the engaged wife of Mortimer Grenville, never made any attempt to withdraw from the society of Maurice Delamere. Her biographer is not obliged to become her apologist or many excuses might be found for her conduct."(9) Two very obvious excuses were that Mortimer was in Paris, ill with a heart condition, and conveniently out of the way for several months, while Lady Amelia Grenville, his mother, keeps inviting Maurice to call because she mistakenly assumed that he was infatuated with her daughter Isabella rather than with Eugenia. Isabella, of course, was in love with Maurice too, though she knew that he, like her brother, loved Eugenia. Mortimer became more grievously ill in Paris, and Isabella solemnly and earnestly pleaded his case to Eugenia, not because she selfishly wished to alienate Eugenia from Maurice for her own sake, but because she knew that Mortimer's health would fail completely. He had such a disagreeable, unloving nature that the only person in the world who had ever touched his heart was Eugenia.

Eugenia decides that she cannot honourably break her promise to Mortimer and therefore pretends that she no longer loves Maurice, hoping that he will then fall in love with Isabella. Eugenia having made this agonizing decision, the author then philosophizes:

> Marriage without love! It is no rare fate, so we may hope that it is not an utterly miserable one. Many there are who seem to find life tolerably comfortable shared by no stronger tie than that of goodwill. But before that state be reached, what aspirations must be renounced! what instincts crushed! How must all that is high be brought low! - all that is strong be enfeebled! - how large a part of the soul's life be utterly destroyed!(10)

Naturally Maurice was bewildered. He didn't immediately turn to the plain and available Isabella, but instead he lapsed into the classical Victorian malady of lethargy, depression and headaches, which annoyed his father even more. But before Maurice could waste away completely or die of a broken heart, the evil Mortimer returns from Paris. For the first time the lovely, but slightly dim, Eugenia sees him in his true colours - such as his remarking on the unattractiveness of his sister Isabella, who had been so loyal, and his treating his mother with disrespect. How would such a man treat a dependent wife?

In a moment of wild abandonment Eugenia flees in a thunder storm and goes to Maurice at his stately home, Framleigh Hall, where she, in turn, falls ill; and Lady Delamere, who has always wanted a daughter, comes to love her as a daughter while nursing her back to health. Eugenia also grows equally fond of gruff old Sir Arthur, thinking to herself what surely must have been a projection of Snow's own feelings.

> Eugenia's heart was filled by a deep, quiet thankfulness... Once more to find, after being deprived of it for so many years, something so like a father's love!... Only an orphan can know the joy she felt; it is one that must be brought by that deep sorrow - it is a dim foreshadowing of that hope those will feel who have never known the love of a parent in this world when they experience it for the first time in all its purity in the next.(11)

Meanwhile the shrewd Mortimer discovers from Isabella that Maurice and Eugenia are lovers and rides over to Framleigh Hall. Once again the rivals stand face to face. Mortimer challenges Maurice to a duel with such ferocious anger that he has a stroke. Eugenia remembers Lady Grenville's warning that "breaking a blood vessel was what the physicians most dreaded, and she (Eugenia) knew that he must have been agitated by such a tempest of rage, as was in itself almost enough to destroy the spark of life, in a frame so enfeebled as his."(12)

The unconscious Mortimer is taken upstairs and put to bed, escorted by the saintly Lady Delamere. Eugenia then promptly bursts into hysterics when a "sudden revulsion of feeling came over her" coupled with the "horrible fear that she would have his (Mortimer's) death to answer for." Maurice's aunt takes her upstairs, and Sir Arthur and Maurice retire to the library to sort things out over a glass of brandy. Nothing much ~~was~~ is sorted, but Sir Arthur expresses his pride in Maurice for standing up to Mortimer like a man. He also confesses to his son his own fears about some poachers whom he had had sent to jail and who had vowed to take revenge on the Delamere family.

Sure enough, in the middle of the night, after everyone was asleep, the poachers set the house on fire. There was frantic activity in rousing everyone to escape. A bit of unconscious snobbery was displayed by the author when she wrote: "A frightful screaming was now heard, but it turned out nothing worse than one of the housemaids, expressing her alarm in the vehement manner peculiar to the race."(13) Suddenly, when the entire building was blazing, with the sky and the hills glowing orange behind, somebody remembers the unconscious Mortimer. At first Eugenia wanted to dash back to rescue him, but Maurice firmly forbids her, and rushes back into the flaming house himself after telling both Eugenia and his parents that here at last is an opportunity for him to prove himself <u>not</u> a coward. He rescues Mortimer only in time for him to regain consciousness and a reconciliation of

sorts to take place.

Maurice: "Let us forget our long feud, Grenville... We have had one feeling in common, why should that divide us?"

Mortimer: "I did not know you... I see now there are other kinds of courage."(14)

Mortimer then tells Eugenia that he forgives her for running away, has another haemorrhage and dies in Maurice's arms, holding Eugenia's hand.

Eugenia and Maurice will of course marry with everyone's blessing, and it is further implied that Framleigh Hall will be rebuilt and that Eugenia will bring to the family a happy unity that has been sadly missing before; for, earlier on, Maurice had described the relationships among himself, his parents, his brother and his maiden aunt, all of whom lived warily together at Framleigh Hall.

> We have all been going on, all our lives, in a sort of armed neutrality. I assure you I feel as if, from the first time I began to be a responsible being, I had been walking upon wires. Long before I could understand what it was, I saw it in the intercourse between my parents... I have sometimes felt so tired of our cold politeness to each other, I have half wished we were uncivilized enough to speak out our minds.(15)

There is little doubt that Snow was identifying with Maurice and projecting her feelings about her own family on to the Delameres. When viewed independently, the story itself is melodramatic; neither the characters nor their dialogue are believable - or, at least, not believable some hundred and twenty-five years later. But, conversely, how many nineteenth century novels and characters of that time are believable? Dickens, Thackeray, George Eliot were all out of the main stream. For most readers of the day, like most opera-goers, the reality was less important than the emotion and the movement of the story. Disbelief was more than willingly suspended. Very often it was discarded entirely.

On the positive side, the story really does move at a nice, rapid pace. Chapter transitions are smooth. The story contains a number of shrewd observations. Snow is especially good at summarizing characters and their relationships. For example, Chapter 2 begins:

> Sir Arthur Delamere was energetic, decided, clear-headed; his wife was impractical, vacillating, dreamy. Theirs was the union of wax and marble - of fire and water. How came they to marry?
>
> This dissimilarity, which might have provoked the question, was in fact, its answer. That like attracts like is true only in regard to moral qualities - in all that relates to the mind the reverse is nearer the truth.(16)

Also, there are a number of amusing and quotable sentences, such as: "Not many parents are entirely above measuring their children's faults by the inconvenience they cause."(17) and: "A visit to an invalid's room was a considerable penance to Sir Arthur, and generally to the invalid also."(18)

Framleigh Hall is well-crafted, an admirable start for a beginner. Like Mrs. Gaskell, Snow took great care in ending her story in such a manner that the reader would have no doubt as to the moral of the story or to the fates of the surviving characters.

> Truly love has various shapes to the hearts visited by it. To some it is a cooling spring - to others a fiery furnace, to some, a wand of support - to others, a scourge. It had turned Eugenia's life to a flowery paradise - Isabella's, to a barren waste.
>
> But in whatever shape, it is the real good of life. Returned or neglected, or even given to an unworthy object, it is never really wasted. It may give nothing but pain, but that pain is the exercise of the most god-like part of our nature, and not to be exchanged for any happiness in which that divine impulse has no part. Then farewell, Isabella and Eugenia; you two most opposite of women - opposite in your fates and characters. Unlike in all beside you, you were unlike in this, that each loved much, and each, therefore, knew the life of the soul. And it may be that in the one experience which is common to all - in the hour when life is matter of recollection, and expectation must encounter only death - that that

> one resemblance shall outweigh all your differences. Then, it may be, we shall each acknowledge this as the only difference - shall perceive the fire of truth consume the past, and leave only this one element indestructable among the ashes.
>
> And Maurice - Whatever new trials await him, he has passed from under the shadow that has clouded his youth.(19)

The novel, which went into a second printing within six months, was extraordinarily well-received by the critics, by Mrs. Gaskell, by Harriet Martineau, by the Carlyles, by Rev.F.M.Blunt,(20) by Prof.Scott and Prof. Newman, by Uncle Charles and Uncle Erasmus - by everyone, in fact, except her immediate family, who more or less took it in stride. But the identity of Florence Dawson was a poorly kept secret. All of the immediate family and Godfrey knew, but not all of them admitted it. On 27 August 1858, Harriet Martineau wrote to Fanny from Ambleside:

> I think this will reach you before you start for C. Darwin's... The great surprise was seeing your brother on Wednesday evening. He was so good as to call. O dear! how old we all grow! He is handsome still, - but to think of him the elderly man! (Robert Mackintosh was then aged fifty-two) By the way, I suspect there is small chance of dear Snow's secret being one long. Your brother would have blurted out if 20 people had been present, I fancy - "Were you not surprised at Snow's authorship" etc. And when M.(21) and I were solemn about the secret, he said lightly that "the family was so very large" etc., as if it was all nonsense about secrecy.(22)

At about the same time Ernest, who was in Munich, wrote to Snow:

> I am afraid I am one of the last to congratulate you on your great success and to tell you how much I like Framleigh... I have been employing all my spare time in perusing it and being a very slow reader and of course not missing a word, it was only last night that I finished it. I was very much interested in it indeed and agree with everyone else in thinking it wonderful. Nevertheless I hope number 2, 3 and so on up till 100 will not be quite so miserable. You really have 'gone in' for too much misery. Maurice, Eugenia, Isabella, nearly all except Hugh are uncomfortable for nine days out of ten. This, however, makes one rejoice all the more when everything comes right in the end. There is one microscopic fault and that is

> the nomenclature. You shouldn't have given all your people such lofty names - Delamere, Mortimer Grenville, Churchill, Linton, Stanley, etc. and then directly you have to bring a poor person you call Kring, Hays or Robinson. After these hints I shall expect my name to appear with yours on the title page of your next. 'By Florence and John Dawson'(23)

Ernest was not the last of the family to congratulate Snow, nor were his criticisms the most severe. Snow wrote to Effie: "I am a little hurt at Dot's (Hope's) not saying <u>one word</u> about it, (whether she has read it or not) I prepared myself for disappointment, but I thought I shd not have that kind of it"(24)

The agony after the publication and its success were almost worse than the agony of the writing and re-writing. From her Uncle Harry's house Snow again wrote to Effie:

> I begin to feel now it wd be rather flat to have not one of the relatives looking at it, so 'tis as well they know, after all. But <u>still</u> I wish I had burnt the book in manuscript. I know, Effie, that O.D. (<u>An Old Debt</u>, her next novel) will be a disappointment. My hopes - may I not say <u>our</u> hopes will be raised by all this unexpected encouragement - more will be expected, it will be read with severer criticism & will not be proportionately approved of - I do feel so astonished at this success I cannot tell you - I think now I need not fear any one thinking it dull, which was what I dreaded.(25)

Her brother Mack, who was beginning to suffer a mysterious but genuine illness, praised the book. Both her mother and father took a different attitude. They thought the story ordinary and trivial. During this period Fanny and Snow had been in constant conflict over trifles - "I am so thankful for what you say about small faults," Snow wrote earlier to Effie, "for our dear mother so often thinks I make too much of small faults & that the way with young people is to pass over them lightly. It was always such a sorrow to me that she & I never cd quite feel together about that."(26) It is possible that Fanny, who had helped her father with research for his historical writings and who had so many important literary women friends, was

slightly jealous of her eldest daughter's success.

On the other hand, Hensleigh, who had been so gentle and romantic in his youth, assumed the role of Victorian patriarch, seldom softened by compassion or understanding. Like his father, he was motivated, it seemed, by the unerring certainty that he always knew what was right and proper. His daughter had written a proper book but not, in his opinion, a particularly perceptive one. Since, on the advice of Mrs Gaskell, Smith, Elder had commissioned An Old Debt, Hensleigh suggested that his daughter submit the second novel to him chapter by chapter for his corrections before sending the manuscript to the publisher. Possibly he was envisioning a compatible mentor-author relationship with Snow similar to that which Richard Lovell Edgeworth had had with his novelist daughter Maria.

Snow, who was back at Linlathen with her Aunt Rich, was quite naturally distressed but complied by sending him the first draft of An Old Debt. He replied:

> My dear Snow, I am sorry you take such an uncomfortable scheme of novel, it quite gives one a pain in the stomach. It is a radically false position in which you place Edward and one in which it is very difficult to sympathise with him. It is a man in a woman's place & the feelings you describe are more those of a woman than a man. You must be content to leave my softening down the scene where Lord Conyngford catches them. It would not have done as it stood & I should like to have altered her exclamation 'do not leave me desolate.' Pray write something more chearful (sic) next time. Your affectionate father, H. WEDGWOOD.(27)

Such a devastating blow to her pride was mitigated somewhat when Smith, Elder accepted the manuscript as she had originally written it, but the damage to her confidence was irreparable. Had she been able to break the contract, she would no doubt have abandoned the second novel on which she had spent more time than the first and

which she had nearly completed by the time of the publication of Framleigh Hall. Instead, she wrote to Effie:

> I have written Papa just saying simply what the reason was why I gave up that great advantage. I felt a slight qualm when you told me of the advertisement (which I have not seen) but really I think I underwent so much in the correcting I shall not have much to bear now - indeed I believe I shall bear its fate with very decent philosophy, if only I can persuade Mama not to read it... I have a line from Papa today telling me of his becoming Chairman of Price's Candle Company. I think he will like having some regular occupation, though I suppose not very interesting.(28)

Despite the success of Framleigh Hall, flashes of doubt still racked her. Over and over again she attempted to justify herself and to anticipate criticism, real or imagined. Several months after the publication of Framleigh Hall, she wrote to Effie from Leith Hill Place, the home of her Uncle Josiah and Aunt Caroline.

> Why I wished to stifle F.H. (and still wish in so far as it is possible) is not so much any fear of its literary merits, tho' this of course I had, too, as because I thought the principle of it is a mistake. In spite of Mr. Scott I do think all novels shd be moral, & it is not. I think the idea is moral - a strong principle by degrees triumphing over a weak nature, but somehow in the writing, it is so overlaid with morbidity that the impression is that of defeat rather than that of conquest. Besides I have come to think it is too like painting a disease. You will be glad to hear I never mean to have any morbid hero or heroine again. I know this will gratify yr highly moral & muscular soul!... Fancy my setting to work to become a Carlyless. - No - never shall the fate of the frog in the fable be mine!(29)

The frog in the fable puffed himself up to imitate the ox and then burst Snow meant Effie to understand that she did not aspire to imitate the genius of Carlyle -- the result would be the same as that of the frog in the fable. While she enjoyed the success of her first novel, she was humble about her talents. Though she intended to wrøte other novels and other books, her aspirations and anxities centred around marriage.

~~If she says that she is unattractive and that no man is likely to fall in love with her so that she will become beautiful and live happily ever after, then she never expected this anyway.~~

~~But of course she did want the fate of the frog and she did intend it to happen, just as she intended "to become a Carlyless."~~ In December of 1858 when she was spending the holidays in Wales, she wrote to Effie: "In staying in the house with Aunt Fanny, though one admires more & more the dignity & force of her character, one feels (at least I feel) more & more the grievous want of softness in it. This comes of being An Old Maid."(30)

Clearly Snow did not want to remain An Old Maid herself. In the evenings, however, she dutifully played backgammon with her Great Aunt Fanny, chess with her Great Aunt Emma and then read Maurice's sermons aloud to both of them. She herself was reading Carlyle's Frederick the Great, which she didn't particularly like. In letters to Effie, Meta, and Julia Sterling, she describes social life in Pembrokeshire with its balls and its handsome officers as seeming to be "out of Pride and Prejudice." There is a light, chatty tone in her letters and an amused, tolerant tone when she speaks of her great aunts and a Christmas Eve ball which she thought she wouldn't attend because it would be so crowded, though she changed her mind at the last minute.

> I went after all, I & Mr. Lort Phillips went together, as the brougham doesn't hold more than two comfortably. I felt so queer tête a tête with that style of man, not quite so much out of my element as you'd think. I have taken a great fancy to him, there is something so pleasant in his great cordiality. That sort of manner covers a multitude of sins with me.(31)

After the balls Snow wrote with great excitement and with a consciousness of her age. "Fancy how horrid it wd be if when I begin to be really middleaged, all my youthful tastes shd wake up,"(32) she wrote to Effie. Six weeks later she added a postscript to another letter to Effie: "P.S. Did you remember I was 26 on Sunday? I feel so

glad to think how far on I am in the journey."(33)

Snow attended several more functions with Mr. Lort Phillips and felt herself "a little fast" when she went to a fair, just happened to meet him there and then allowed him to drive her home. She also went out walking with a Dr. Edward Wilson who had a hideous moustache, in spite of which Aunt Fanny said she wished he "wd take a fancy to one of us." ("One of us" meant either Snow or her cousin Louisa, the eldest daughter of Snow's Uncle Harry and Aunt Jessie, who was prone to fits of giggles.) Yet, in spite of the laughing habit, three months later Louisa became engaged to Major John William Kempson of the 99th Foot Brigade. Snow thought this was a very romantic affair, whereas her great aunts felt it was not a particularly suitable match. Snow wrote to Effie that Aunt Fanny "disliked all young people so violently," and when Snow tried to defend Louisa's romantic feelings, Aunt Fanny's replies made her feel as if she had been "under a nutmeg grater." Snow said of her Aunt Fanny and the argument: "It made me quite depressed to think of a person at the end of life urging upon a person at the beginning that there was no such thing as love in the world."(34)

The need for love and kindness was as important to Snow as her belief in God and the life hereafter - and there seemed no earthly reassurances of either. She was hyper-sensitive to criticism - upset when her Aunt Fanny referred to a concert as "Beelzebub's amusement," and depressed that her Aunt Rich said she had no manners when she absentmindedly forgot to open a door for her elders. "The great secret of peace with Aunt R.," she told Effie, "is never to reason with her - either yield entirely, or take one's own way. I of course always yield entirely as she only wants to manage me in little trifles that don't matter.(35)

During this period (1858-1859) Snow began having more frequent and more severe migraine headaches and neuralgia or what she called "face

ache." Quite often her moods swung abruptly from elation to depression, and, like her Great Aunt Emma, she discovered that it was easier to sleep if one drank a glass of wine before bed. Lack of unity and support within the family greatly upset her. "I can't tell you sometimes how I hate the independent life we all lead one of another," she told Effie, "& wish we cd fuse into each other more. I am sure you are the most fusible one of us - what shall we do without you!"(36)

Effie had decided to go to Germany for a year to study music. When Snow was in Wales staying with her Uncle Harry and Aunt Jessie, and not displeasing either her great aunts or her parents, she wrote to Effie:

> I have had a hard struggle with myself before resolving to go even to Down. I am afraid it sounds fantastic and Maurice-ian(37) but every year that passes I find I shrink more from all family gatherings & shd be too much inclined to stay here for ever just as I am now. But why do I write such things - to nobody but you cd they be said.(38)

She went to Down and found that she was not too headachy or "pendulumish" in mood. There were, however, quite justifiable reasons for her to experience both. Most young ladies of her age and background were only seeking "a suitable marriage." Snow was seeking both a romantic as well as a suitable romance, and, on top of it all, she was writing novels about romance and marriage, though after her father's harsh criticism of <u>An Old Debt</u>, she abandoned a third novel that was half finished.

The pressure placed upon her to marry was considerable. When she was in Wales, she wrote to Effie that

> ... Aunt F. is harping on her familiar theme 'what will Effie do when Philip (39) <u>takes</u> her, she can't go frisking after her concerts then?'
> 'Oh, I'm afraid Philip won't take any of us.' (with an utterly wasted-on-the-air irony)
> 'Why don't <u>you</u> take him?'
> I give out deeply humble utterances of unworthiness for such a high honour, which are all likewise entirely wasted. If I don't get to hate the sound of that man's name, I

> shall be a very good Christian... I feel inclined to remind her sometimes that he can only marry one of us, & then there will be all the rest just as bad off as ever. I am so glad Aunt E. is of course quite of the opposite faction, she told me the only person she was anxious to marry was Mary. 'As for all of you, you wd never have such free & easy lives if you were married, I can tell you - yr husbands wd be a very different rule to yr father's & mother's' - to which I found myself more able to agree & to sympathise.(40)

George Lort Phillips married in 1859 and Dr. Edward Wilson became engaged in the same summer. That Snow was beginning to see herself as a spinster was evidenced from an observation she made to Effie after she had met a Miss Young at Lady Inglis's at Milton Bryan in Bedfordshire. Miss Young was a middle-aged Englishwoman who had lived in Italy ten years.

> She gave us an impression of the spinsterial state being a very hard one in Italy, no woman who does not marry being exempt from scandalous attacks according to her account - Lou (41) & I settled we had better not go there. People may get tired of us in England, but if they wd not let our characters alone it wd be a hard case.(42)

At the same time Snow was also living in an atmosphere of ideas which were soon to explode upon the world with a force that still arouses tremors and controversies well over a century later.

* * * * *

The year 1859 saw the publication of Snow's second novel An Old Debt, Hensleigh's A Dictionary of English Etymology and Charles Darwin's On the Origin of Species. The response to the latter two was overwhelming. A new word, Darwinism, immediately entered the language. For many of his contemporaries Darwin's work destroyed the very foundations on which western civilization was based. In his Introduction to the book, Charles wrote: "I am fully convinced that species are not immutable; but that those belonging to what are called the same genera are lineal descendants of some other and generally extinct species, in the same manner as the acknowledged varieties of

any one species are the descendants of that species."(43)

On the Origin of Language, Hensleigh's Introduction to A Dictionary of English Etymology was equally revolutionary in its premises which supported and reinforced Charles's line of reasoning. Hensleigh came to the conclusion that "language, like writing, is an art handed down from one generation to another, and when we would trace upwards to its origin the pedigree of this grand distinction between man and the brute creation, we must either suppose that the line of tradition has been absolutely endless, that there never was a period at which the family of man was not to be found on earth, speaking a language bequeathed to him by his ancestors, or we must at last arrive at a generation which was not taught their language by their parents."(44)

Those who disliked or disagreed with Hensleigh's work sneeringly referred to it as the "bow wow wow theory" of language. Though the criticism and abuse of Darwinism was far greater than that directed towards Hensleigh, both men took to their beds and their horsehair sofas. When Hensleigh's nerves recovered sufficiently for him to travel, he and Fanny went to Down where he and Charles could console one another.

~~A backlash of Darwinism was a feverish pursuit of Truth and a determined perfectability of mankind, rather like a new search for the Holy Grail~~. Snow had been aware of the conflict between Science and Religion much sooner than the rest of her contemporaries, as she had actually lived in this schizophrenic atmosphere of ideas as they were emerging within her own family. So, of course, had most of the other young Darwins and Wedgwoods, but they had less trouble than Snow in reconciling old beliefs with new ideas. Man was different from animals; for most of them, it was as simple as that.

Snow wrote an article for Macmillan's Magazine (45) which attempted to

explain the theory of evolution to laymen in non-emotive terms. Her Uncle Charles said it was the best article he himself had read on the subject.

While she had reservations about certain theological doctrines, such as the Virgin birth, Snow naturally sought the hand of God in all of the events of life; and though she scoffed at the idea of Hell, she believed quite literally that death was followed by a reunion in Heaven with the loved ones who had gone ahead. Science, and Darwinism in particular, offered no assurance that human beings would survive the tomb. Because the decay and dissolution of human beings seemed so much more capable of being truly known than their survival or future evolution, the theologian's reassuring voice was supplanted by the sharp pronouncements of scientists and "mad doctors." Meanwhile Death had lost none of its invincible terrors.

Charles Kingsley believed that because the masses were losing the spirit of Christianity they clung to it all the more convulsively, whether High Church or Evangelical. It did not matter much what a person believed, but for happiness and material success one must believe something. Without the will to believe, there was a feeling of near panic which is what Snow and many other hyper-sensitive intellectuals experienced.

Snow turned inward, and the paralyzing effect of introversion left her incapable of positive, self-affirming action. No one acts decisively on a plan which half of the mind accepts and the other half questions or rejects. A person with two minds is unstable in all ways, unable to make up his or her mind because there is no one mind to make up. Indecision becomes despair, and the pain of existence becomes great enough to make retreat from society a serious consideration. The number of mental and physical breakdowns among the brilliant men and women of Snow's acquaintance was extraordinary - John Stuart Mill, John Ruskin, Florence Nightingale. ~~George Eliot became an agnostic~~.

~~So did Snow.~~

Others among the Wedgwood-Darwin clan took the either-or approach and agonized less. Snow suffered from lethargy, sleeplessness, migraine headaches, toothaches and neuralgia. She felt the intense restless misery of being alone with no affection or sympathy from those around her, while, at the same time, she was being pushed out into the glaring scrutiny of public fame with the enormous success of An Old Debt.

* * * * *

An Old Debt is a different sort of novel from Framleigh Hall, more tightly structured, and written in what for the mid-Victorian period was a very modern style. It is contained in one volume of only two hundred and eighty-four pages, one third of the length of Framleigh Hall. Much of it is written in dialogue, brief, natural-sounding conversation. There are fewer paragraphs of exposition which clarify the characters's feelings, and the direct address to the reader is eliminated. From the first edition on, through five more editions, An Old Debt was published under the author's true name, Frances Julia Wedgwood. There are fewer pages of pure description, but, like Framleigh Hall, An Old Debt begins with a picture of the setting.

> The sun had sunk below the horizon, but a pale watery gleam still lingered in the western sky, its brightness enhanced by surrounding clouds. It illuminated the west front of Conyngford Castle with a clear, soft radiance, glittering in the long row of windows, mellowing the old grey walls into an almost golden hue, and shining in the rain drops on the ivy till the green leaves seemed covered with jewels.(46)

The story itself is hardly any more believable than the story of Framleigh Hall. It is - and was, for its time, - escapist literature, and, as escapist literature, it was entirely successful. The major difference between the sets of characters in the two novels is in the two heroines. While Eugenia in Framleigh Hall and Ellen, the heroine of An Old Debt, are both orphans with wealthy guardians, they are

quite different in temperament. Ellen is a feminist heroine. All of her thoughts are not good and pure, her behaviour is at times selfish and spoiled; but, she matures during the story from a wilful, self-centered child to a compassionate, independent woman capable of making responsible decisions on her own. Unlike Eugenia, Ellen does not swoon or fall ill with emotion, nor is she the innocent, angelic child-woman, who will live happily ever after because she has found a fine moral man to love and protect her. She is forthright and candid; she gets into problems because she says what she thinks and does what she pleases.

The story centres ~~around~~ on a lonely, kindly forty-five year old bachelor, Lord Conyngford, who has a castle and great wealth. He is guardian of nineteen year old Ellen Scudmore and her fifteen year old brother Frederick, who is frail and suffering from a mysterious illness that drains his vitality. Lord Conyngford has also taken a paternal interest in another orphan, Edward Young, the son of a distant cousin. Edward is studying to become a minister but supplements his income from Lord Conyngford by tutoring.

Unless Lord Conyngford marries and has children, the heir to his estate is a disagreeable young first cousin, Lionel Morant, who courts Ellen not because he loves her but because he fears Lord Conyngford has fallen in love with her himself despite the wide difference in age. Lord Conyngford has indeed fallen in love with the precocious Ellen and proposes marriage when she comes of age; Ellen tells him that she is fond of him but that she could never truly love him. Meanwhile Lord Conyngford has persuaded Edward Young to take a year off from his clerical studies to go abroad as tutor to the sickly Fred. Ellen and her step-mother accompany them to Switzerland. Ellen sits in on the lessons Edward is giving Fred. She is much brighter than her brother, and soon she and Edward fall in love.

Suspecting this might happen, Lionel joins the party at the villa where they are staying. Through a series of rather improbable letters from his dead mother and from a former servant, Edward learns that his own father, a drunkard and a gambler, deprived Lord Conyngford of the great love of his life by failing to mail a letter written by his sister-in-law Clara accepting Lord Conyngford's proposal of marriage. Thinking himself rejected, Lord Conyngford, who wouldn't compromise by marrying a woman he did not love, lived a lonely and unhappy life until the arrival of Ellen. Only then was he able truly to love another woman. Clara, thinking that Lord Conyngford had changed his mind about loving her, died of consumption and a broken heart. Edward's father never confessed his treachery to anyone, but before Edward's mother's death, she wrote the unhappy story in a letter to Edward.

Edward feels greatly in debt to Lord Conyngford, not only because Lord Conyngford has helped him financially, but because Lord Conyngford was robbed of marital happiness by his worthless father who was constantly borrowing money from his cousin and died heavily in debt to him. Finding out from Morant that Lord Conyngford is in love with Ellen and has proposed marriage to her, Edward knows he could never repeat the injustice of his father and rob his friend and mentor from a second love. Thus he withdraws somewhat from the intimate friendship he and Ellen had shared.

One day while Edward is in the village, Ellen, in defiance of Edward's warnings, but to attract his attention, takes Fred out on the lake in a boat. A storm comes up and they are nearly drowned, but Ellen, without any assistance from either Edward or Lionel finally gets Fred and the boat safely back to shore. The exposure in the storm immediately worsens Fred's condition. Ellen agonizes over her impulsive action which she fears will hasten her brother's death and make Edward despise her. Edward is not feeling well himself. Having

gone into the village, he has been exposed to an epidemic of cholera. He decides that he must leave and that Lord Conyngford must be sent for immediately. "The father's injuries had been open; the son's reparation was secret; Edward remembered this, but he found it difficult to reconcile himself to the consequences."(47) Ellen and her step-mother will have to nurse Fred by themselves. Lionel Morant has decided to leave for fear of catching the disease.

When the young Fred discovers that he is dying and that his entire life has been spent lying about as an invalid, he says bitterly (and significantly) "All these years I might just as well have been a girl."

Edward consoles him by his own confidence in the splendid rewards of the life hereafter. Fred then says that he knows he must make up his mind to die and must "appear before the judgement-seat of God."

Edward replies: "Frederick, that thought is the only one that reconciles me to life. The expectation of that hour when I shall be judged by one who knows every thought of my mind, every feeling of my heart; who has weighed every temptation that ever happened to me, in a perfectly just, accurate balance! Oh Fred, that is the only hope that gives me strength to live. Nothing can be unendurable that ends in that."(48)

Edward then leaves. Lord Conyngford arrives, realizes the sacrifice Edward has made and goes in search of him but finds he has died all alone in a lowly inn.

The book ends with the son having given his life for his father's sins - an old debt of his father's has been paid. Ellen never knew how much he loved her. Fred, too, will soon die. Ellen sees that her debt, too, is toward Lord Conyngford. Though she will never love him passionately in the way she loved Edward, she does love him and will do her duty by being a good wife to him.

* * * * *

Obviously Snow drew more upon her own experiences in this novel than in the first one. Ellen's character is remarkably like her own. She even has a scene in which Ellen absentmindedly fails to open a door for her elders and then feels embarrassment, just as Snow had felt under the same circumstance with her Aunt Rich. Snow, too, has a much loved brother dying of a mysterious disease who is sent abroad in hopes of finding a cure. The idea of the elder sister left abroad to look after the ailing brother is reminiscent of Snow nursing Alfred. The setting is Vevey where she and Alfred went. Her choice of a hero who is both a minister and a tutor, sacrificing himself for the good of others, was just the sort of man Snow longed for herself.

An Old Debt had enormous appeal, especially for women, because the heroine was a woman of action, a woman who had faults as well as virtues and one who was capable of change - a feminist heroine with whom women could either identify or admire from afar. The chief criticism of the book was that Ellen did not succeed in marrying her true love Edward, that Edward was too pure, and that the problem of their love was solved by his death rather than by some positive action taken by one or the other. Ellen was recognizably real; Edward was too good to be true. But whatever the flaws of the characters or of the novel itself, Snow had become an important and famous author.

An Old Debt created quite a literary stir, quickly going into second and third editions. It was much discussed and much praised (outside the immediate family) with only occasional criticism. One old lady in Wales, a Mrs. Brett, wouldn't shake hands with Snow because she had killed Edward Young. Another Welsh lady, a Mrs. Wilcox, said: "I won't speak of it as the work of a young person because it wd be a very remarkable book whoever had written it."(49)

As always, Snow worried very much about what other people were thinking and saying about her, though she pretended the opposite. "I

think I care less than you wd expect as to its success in a general way," she wrote to Effie, "but when I imagine particular individuals reading it I feel very uncomfortable - rather like one does in those horrid dreams when one finds oneself dishabile (sic) in a very public place."(50)

What, if anything, her father said of the book after its publication isn't known. At the time Snow seemed to be having more difficulties in her relationship with her mother, and this both distressed and frustrated her, for she again wrote to Effie:

> I feel so perplexed about what she really wishes about openness. She always says so much about wishing it, yet it appears to me that she only wishes to wish it - that she does everything to make it difficult & wd prefer on the whole that one never talked to her of troubles or difficulties but kept to the superficial things. This I generally do, yet she does not seem to like that either. - I am sure I only wish to consider her happiness, yet I certainly do not add to it, whichever alternative I take - I suppose the only way wd be to have no troubles or difficulties, which is not an aim I feel capable of reaching.(51)

Meta Gaskell wrote to Snow praising An Old Debt so highly that she said she felt no guilt at all for reading it on a Sunday because "parts were more beautiful than a sermon."

Godfrey wrote Snow two pages of comment on the book, noting down some sentences he didn't particularly like with their page numbers. On the whole, however, he praised the book.

> We have read the book aloud, not missing any, which is unusual when my father is a listener. I have one of my father's criticism to give in which I thoroughly agree, that the more dramatic the form of a novel is the better it suits us... I do not see that Edward is too good to be natural - though I am scarcely able to judge as I cannot conceive a man under the influence of such strong passions as he is. Passions that drive a man to bury his face in the damp grass all night are so beyond my ken that I cannot judge of the sacrifice of such a love as he wd be capable of and cannot tell whether it is too great for him to make with regard to probabilities."(52)

Godfrey's criticism was just about the final straw with Snow, and she announced:

> I am angry with all you Wedgewoods for being so puritanical about Edward - all he did was to evade an answer to a very insignificant question. He had been up to see the sunrise, & it did not matter whether he had got up on purpose or not. You must know Truth is a quality on which I pique myself, so I do not relish any criticisms on that score. As to the offensive chapter - it was necessary, nothing else wd have brought about an explosion. I don't think that kind of character incapable of such a fault.(53)

Snow never wrote another novel. Why? And what is one to make of such a brief, blighted career? Certainly she had matured as a writer between the two books. At the age of twenty-six she had made a remarkable start and, to an outside observer, showed every promise of an outstanding career. Therein, perhaps, lies the answer. She was afraid of success. A perfectionist, far more critical of herself than of others, she never believed herself either capable of or worthy of success.

That her father's dictionary and her Uncle Charles's On the Origin of Species came out during the same year as An Old Debt was unfortunate. By comparison, at least in her own mind, any romantic novel would seem trivial. Also her father's harsh interference no doubt discouraged her, and certainly she didn't want to incur his displeasure. Still, other nineteenth century women, such as Jane Austen, the Brontës and Elizabeth Barrett, were able to be creative in the patriarchal home. Possibly after trying her hand at other types of writing, she intended to return to the novel, for she was as afraid of a permanent committment as of success.

How then does one evaluate the two novels? Competent and promising but not brilliant and, by today's judgements, contrived, obvious and tedious. But, as later writings prove, she had the sensitivity, perception and skill with words to develop into a

novelist of the first rank. She greatly admired Jane Austen and, had she persevered, she might well have reflected with both seriousness and wit, the manners and morals of London society in the 1860's and 1870's, as Jane Austen had done for a more provincial world nearly half a century earlier.

* * * * *

Godfrey came to visit in London in 1861 during the social season, shortly after the Hensleigh Wedgwoods had moved to No 1 Cumberland Place, an even grander residence. Godfrey confided in Snow that he was in love with Effie and hoped to marry her, though he feared she would turn him down. Not wanting to pursue his suit unless there was some chance of success, he asked Snow if she could find out for him Effie's feelings towards him and let him know if there was any hope. In the meantime, he asked Effie to a dance and to attend a concert. Snow was nonplussed. While she was not romantically in love with Godfrey as she wanted to be with someone, she was fond of him and had supposed he felt the same way. Following the Wedgwood tradition of marrying first cousins, she assumed that eventually he would ask her to marry him. That he was in love with Effie came as a complete shock. Snow, of course, did as Godfrey requested. Effie seemed equally surprised when Snow spoke to her. She had seen no indication of his affection for her and had always found him a bit dull, though she might consider him if he broadened his interests and became a bit livelier.

Snow conveyed this information back to Godfrey who began writing letters to Effie, sending her gifts and coming to London to visit the Hensleigh Wedgwoods more frequently than he had in the past. Effie was at the time nearly twenty-two years of age, conceited about her own attractiveness and as immature emotionally as she was precocious intellectually. She was flattered by Godfrey's attentions and confessed to Snow that she now found their soft-spoken, serious-minded cousin

interesting. Snow, who had fallen into a lengthy depression, replied: "I'm glad you do appreciate him. Strange to say, I think he is very little appreciated as everybody thinks he is commonplace, which, when you get below the surface, he is not. If he had a backbone, I sh'd think him perfect, but that is a fatal want."(54)

Godfrey's "fatal want" was the same one that had affected the eldest sons of the previous two generations of Wedgwoods. Like his great-uncle John and his Uncle Joe, he had served his apprenticeship at the Etruria Pottery, done his duty and was attempting to combine the two occupations of managing a factory and being a country gentleman. He was a kind, modest man who would much have preferred someone else to wield power. Effie was very much a woman attracted to power.

In the spring of 1862, when Godfrey visited the Hensleigh Wedgwoods in their Cumberland Place home in Regent's Park, he was both fascinated and bewildered by Effie's unpredictable behaviour. When he asked her if she wanted him to accompany her to an exhibition at the Royal Academy, she replied that she didn't. He couldn't imagine what he had done - or hadn't done, to offend her. Neither could Snow. On the following evening Godfrey and Mack and Ernie took Snow and Effie to a ball. Godfrey asked Effie for a waltz, and she replied that she had already promised it to Clarke Hawkshaw, son of Sir John Hawkshaw of Hollycombe. Godfrey soon found himself dancing with Clarke's sister Mary, who seemed as placid and agreeable as Effie was volatile and difficult.

Four months later, in June of 1862, Godfrey and Mary Hawkshaw were married. In May of 1863, after the birth of a son Cecil, Mary died. But before her death, the three sisters, Snow, Effie and Hope, who were then aged twenty-nine, twenty-three and eighteen had many lengthy and serious discussions about marriage and about their own personal

futures. All three were feminists. The consensus was that, generally speaking, a married woman sacrificed not only her independence but also the opportunity of fulfilling her own talents and interests. If she had children, her duty was to her children above herself. There was no reason to marry unless one particularly wanted children, which none of the three did, or unless one fell desperately and passionately in love and was loved in return. Hope said she didn't think she was capable of such a passion; Snow said no man could ever feel such a passion for her. Effie was still smarting from the fickleness of Godfrey who, after his marriage, told her he was still in love with her. In a solemn pact the three sisters decided they would never marry. Instead, they would maintain their independence, develop their minds and pursue their own individual interests. Marriage would not be for them the stifling, subordinate experience that it seemed to be for their mother and their Aunt Emma Darwin. They would by the examples of their own lives support the feminist cause.

* * * * *

If the three sisters were having personal difficulties and feeling themselves pushed into making permanent life decisions, so also were the three brothers. Over a year earlier it had become clear that Mack's mysterious disease (which later generations would have diagnosed as muscular dystrophy) was worsening and that it would be impossible for him to do any work at all. Travel to a warmer climate, such as North Africa, was the best medical advice, so plans were being made for him to spend the winter in Algiers. Ernest had decided to follow in his father's footsteps and apply for a position in the civil service, but only recently a law had been passed that aspirants had to pass a written Government examination. Snow, who was at Ravensbourne visiting her friends Hilary and Alice Bonham Carter, wrote to Effie:

> I feel very uncomfortable about poor Erny. I
> am so afraid the result will be unsatisfactory.
> I cd bear to see him very much disappointed &

> cast down if he felt he had not done his best, but if he only looks upon it as a piece of ill luck I wd rather he were altogether careless about the matter. One wd not regret any failure that made a man of him, - & I do sometimes hope the man is there, 'tho so strangely hidden, - I cannot help feeling, unless the Civil Service is mere luck (which I shd be sorry to think) that it is out of the question. - Have our parents thought of anything else? It always breaks the shock of disappointment to find there has been some substitute discussed - I hope it will be anything rather than law, any sort of commercial engagement wd be better - I wd so gladly change places with him.(55)

The situation with Alfred, who had difficulties with his studies and had failed to qualify for university, was even gloomier. Again from Ravensbourne, Snow wrote:

> It seems as if manual occupation were the only thing that wd make him happy, & I suppose the sea is the only thing that wd give that. I cannot think that any mercantile place wd be more than a mere prelude to an idle restless life... Oh, it is such a tremendous charge for a parent to have to decide for anyone like him! almost a man in years yet a child in thought! - it is too much one human being having to take the will of another into his hands - & that one such a tender nature as our dear father.(56)

In the spring of 1860, all seemed decided. Mack wrote from Algiers that he felt better, his appetite was good, although his legs were still weak. Ernest passed the Civil Service exam, and Snow wrote from Cumberland Place to Effie, who was still at Down: "We have been made very happy about Erny & I am sure I see a great change in our dear father already - but I reproach myself in thinking so much more about you than even Erny."(57)

Hensleigh had procured a midshipman's berth for Alfred, and against Alfred's wishes, packed him off to sea. Both Snow and Hope felt it would be too upsetting to Alfred to say goodbye at the docks, but Fanny and Hensleigh insisted upon accompanying him and having a word with the ship's captain before the ship, and at least one reluctant

midshipman, set sail for South America.

Snow's "pendulumism" was beginning to swing in an upward direction. There had been disappointments about marriage and about the difficulties of being a novelist. New decisions had been made, and she was capable of once again entering society, even though she saw herself as an old maid who would never again write romantic novels, but who would attempt to understand the word of God, believe it, reconcile it with the new science her uncle had created, and, above all, do her duty by her family and friends. It was an enormous come-down and compromise from her original hopes, but she was able to accept with better grace the situation in which fate, and her own traits of character, had cast her. "We are getting very clerical," she wrote from Cumberland Place to Effie who was back in Germany. "Ma dining out with a Bishop one night & I with an Archdeacon the next! She said he was as dull as his own story of Greece, but she liked Browning, who sat by her, very much - only he is a fearfully jolly widower."(58)

How important in her own life this fearfully jolly widower was to become Snow could hardly have imagined.

Chapter 5

Dear Mr. Browning (1863-1865)

> "We have each our own nadir; when I can look up, I suppose we shall find we have each our own zenith too."
>
> Julia Wedgwood to Robert Browning
> 1 July 1864

It was inevitable that Snow and Browning should meet. They were in the same social and intellectual circles. Elizabeth Barrett Browning had died two years earlier, in 1861, and after a period of self-imposed isolation, Browning was trying to assuage both his loneliness and his sense of failure as the "author of unreadable books" by being engaged in a busy social life. Encouraged by a new popularity which he had not achieved during his wife's lifetime, he now eagerly embraced the London intellectual-social scene. An extrovert with charming manners, a loud, resonant voice and a fund of amusing stories, he was a much sought-after dinner guest.

In a letter postmarked 13 July 1863 and addressed to her sister Effie, who was visiting their cousins at Leith Hill Place, Snow describes Browning at a party to which she and two Erskine cousins from Scotland, Louisa and Claude, were taken by their Aunt Rich:

> I had Browning to myself for the chief part of the evening. He was perhaps a little too loud and rollicking. I got into a very comfortable corner between him, Mr. Milnes(1) and Madame Mohl(2) who was, as Louisa would say, 'in shouts' all the time - it was all very loud & jovial, & I did wish once or twice that some music would strike up. The great subject was Mr. Swinburne's poems. Milnes was attacking Browning for attacking them, & B. defended himself very indignantly from the charge of having dissuaded the publisher from accepting them, in which story he said there was not a word of truth. It was very wrong to fabricate such a legend, but I thought it would have been better taste for Mr. B. not to have said so much against these unhappy poems - he said they were a third-rate imitation of Byron which

> if a man believed, he would jump off Waterloo Bridge, & then went on with very fierce contempt against them, - which he said the author would attribute to the jealousy of a 'brother bard.'(3)

Telling Effie that she had worn Effie's green silk dress and Hope's great hoop, which was painful to sit upon, and made her tremble for the tables when she ventured to move across the room, she then mentioned Browning's personal attentiions to her: "He was so particularly civil, wanting to know what time he should find Mama at home. When I said she was out of town, hoping we should see something of each other in October, when he came back to town - I never saw such an unlionish lion."(4)

Clearly Snow and Browning had met before. From her description, she had found him interesting as a literary personality but was not yet attracted to him as a man. Indeed, having made the decision never to marry, she no doubt set up a defensive barrier when encountering eligible men. And Browning was a most eligible widower.

* * * * *

Fanny and Browning had sat next to each other at the dinner party and she had asked him for letters of introduction to several of his friends in Florence. Mack's condition had worsened and Fanny was taking him to the warmer climate of Italy. Browning complied, sending her letters of introduction to two of his friends, Isa Blagden and the American sculptor Harriet Hosmer. Apparently these were never used. When it became apparent that Mack's condition was terminal, they returned to London. Fanny and Snow took turns in nursing him, reading to him and keeping him amused now that he was permanently bed-ridden. There was, however, some conflict and rivalry between mother and daughter. Mack wanted Snow with him as much as possible, and she felt inadequate and clumsy, later writing to her minister, the Revd. F.D. Maurice: "I know by painful experience that a deaf person can be hardly any use in a sick room, though there is a stage of illness at which I do not feel

it an insuperable hindrance when there is no hurry in executing directions."(5)

Though Hope and Effie were sent to the Darwins for a lengthy visit, the family attempted as nearly as possible to lead a normal life, but the inevitability of Mack's death at such an early age and in such a slow, painful manner greatly distressed Snow. Her piety became tinged with doubts. Two months before Mack's death, Maurice wrote Snow a letter which he hoped would be of comfort to her. She replied:

> Dear and kind friend,
> I was inexpressibly touched by your letter. I hope I shall see you tomorrow, but I prefer to thank you by letter. At a time when one's whole being aches with the strain of long suffering, there is nothing more soothing than any word of sympathy - rather there is nothing else soothing. It <u>is</u> much more welcome than any thing it <u>does</u>.
> If you care to know where we ultimately differ, it is that I do not understand the idea of wanting to be anything else but a simple fragment or specimen of humanity that I never felt it, - that I have all my life, from my earliest infancy, had the most ardent desire to believe in the unseen world, that I feel more & more it is with me only a <u>hope</u> & not a belief, that now that I am brought face to face with Death this comes upon me more than ever, that I do not really believe in God as I believe in the existence of my human father, for instance. To all that you say, my spirit replies - Yes, that is what I <u>hope</u>. - This is not said in any spirit of controversy against anything in your most kind letter. Only I think mine must be a specimen of a common experience & I want you to understand it...(6)

No one was ever more vulnerable or in need of a saviour.

On a chilly, grey London evening in April of 1864, Fanny and Hensleigh gave a dinner party which included Browning as well as the Carlyles, the A.J. Scotts, Erasmus Darwin and Snow. Snow looked at Browning across her parents' dinner table, reading his lips with almost as much pleasure as she read his poetry. He had suffered an even greater loss in the death of his wife than she would suffer with the

untimely death of Mack. Browning had suffered and endured, ~~even to writing poetry and giving pleasure to others by a cheerful presence~~.

At the time Snow was thirty-one; Browning was fifty-one, famous and handsome in a rugged, masculine way not often associated with poets. Unexpectedly she was attracted to him with a suddenness of passion reminiscent of her heroine in Framleigh Hall - "overcome by the most intense, spontaneous feeling of her soul... with which she must struggle as a deadly sin."

Browning was adored by scores of fashionable women, many younger and wealthier and prettier than Snow, who already had the appearance of a prim, untouchable woman. Yet when he looked across the dinner table, he, too, was attracted by something both physical and spiritual in her. In many ways she must have reminded him of his wife in the early days of their courtship. Both women were small and frail and dark in colouring. Both were highly intelligent, with a literary gift and sensibility. They had both received praise for their published writings. Both were outwardly modest and submissive, yet a perceptive man would have sensed that within each was a passionate, rebellious spirit. Browning, whose actions were guided by intuition and whose closest friendships were with women, was excited by Snow as he had not been by any woman other than Elizabeth. With extraordinary prescience, he guessed that she was capable of understanding him and of stimulating him intellectually in a way that no merely fashionable woman could do.

There were similarities in the two women's circumstances as well. Elizabeth had been a semi-invalid who needed care and protection; Snow's deafness made her appear equally vulnerable. Both were sensitive, sheltered, eldest daughters with brothers called Bro. Elizabeth's Bro had drowned accidentally, bringing about or at least contributing to, her invalidism and reclusiveness. Snow's Bro was also dying; she was clearly distressed and seeking the same sort of spiritual

consolation that Elizabeth had sought. Snow's devotion to the strange, half-mad Erskine had its counterpart in Elizabeth's deep involvement with an Evangelical clergyman, the Revd. George Barrett Hunter.

At the dinner table, while Carlyle thundered and raved like King Lear about the need for a single heroic figure to rise from the revolutions on the Continent, Browning was suddenly taken ill with a severe migraine, which interrupted the party and greatly embarrassed him. Fanny took him into the parlour where he could rest on a couch. Snow brought ice packs and placed them on his head while he tried to be resolute against what he later described as "not pain but the stupidity that accompanies it." It was an intimate moment recognized as such by them both.

Several days later Browning, who ordinarily would have sent a servant, came personally to call on Fanny with a bouquet of flowers and a note of apology. She was out shopping. Snow was alone in the parlour copying one of Blake's engravings. She had been thinking of Browning - with what Effie described as "her tendency towards idolatry" - almost constantly since the evening of the dinner party. The unexpectedness of meeting him alone emboldened her to invite him into the parlour and to make a proposal unusual for a young woman of her background and upbringing. As she herself later put it, "A woman who has taken the initiative in a friendship with a man, as I have with you, has either lost all right feeling or else come to a very definite decision on the issue of all such friendships."(7)

She asked Browning to call on her once a week to discuss literary matters and moral issues. Their intercourse would be of a spiritual nature, with the clear understanding that the "man-woman" feelings which so often complicate friendships between persons of the opposite sex would not enter into it. She thought that this stipulation would not bother him since he had already experienced the great love of his

life and, in any event, was getting on in years. As far as her own feelings were concerned, there would be no difficulty as she was "shielded by the deliberate decision of her mature life" never to marry.

In an age in which well-bred young women were taught never openly to mention such matters, Browning was naturally intrigued. That Snow was forthright enough to tell him that she had irrevocably renounced any sexual feelings towards men was novelty enough to be a challenge rather than a deterrent to him. It must also have reminded him of his own idealistic and impossible suggestion to Elizabeth nearly two decades earlier - that if she could care for him only as a friend he would promise faithfully to live with her forever "as chaste as brother and sister."

Snow, who had a predilection towards martyrdom and tragic endings, probably naively believed that to be a spiritual and intellectual companion to a man like Browning would satisfy all her emotional longings. Perhaps, like Florence Nightingale waiting for her destiny to make itself known, she saw the act of helping him as a possible divinely-ordained mission for her future. She wanted very much to help, to serve and to be needed. And, at that moment, she needed his help in understanding why a just and righteous God should permit her young brother to suffer such a cruel death. That she so clearly needed Browning was an important element in the beginning of their friendship. Browning, too, needed to be needed. And she made him feel young again. The past was over. He might risk a future.

Charmed and flattered, he accepted her invitation to friendship. On Sunday afternoons, shortly after one o'clock, he took the new Underground train from his house in Warwick Crescent to the Wedgwood home in Regent's Park. "I dare say that I have managed to give you a notion that the distance between your house and mine is formidable," he told her. "The time of the journey from door to door cannot exceed

twenty minutes, by railway."(8)

Throughout the late spring and early summer of 1864 they saw one another once a week, and sometimes they met, not always by chance, at art exhibitions, musical gatherings and dinner parties. On Sunday afternoons behind the closed doors of the drawing room at 1, Cumberland Place, they spoke of their own writings and what was happening in the literary world in general. Both thrived on gossip and literary analysis; they moved in the same social circles and knew the same people. They discussed God, the teachings of Erskine, Scott and Maurice, the promise of a life in the hereafter and the spiritual role of the artist. Snow confided to him her personal distress and her fears for her dying brother. From the depth of his own sorrow, he comforted her, but the emotions which emerged were something more than a mutual experience of grief, and this was observed by others.

Snow's parents felt some apprehension. Hensleigh, who undervalued his daughter's abilities, frankly wondered why a man like Browning would pay her so much attention. Fanny liked Browning and found him attractive. She also knew that at the time he was calling on Snow every Sunday, his name was also being linked with that of the poetess Jean Ingelow and with Snow's friend Hilary Bonham Carter, as possible second Mrs. Brownings. With the instincts and knowledge of a woman of the world whose relations with her own husband as well as her friendship with Ras Darwin were more passionate than was proper in mid-Victorian England, Fanny suspected that consciously or unconsciously Browning's appeal to her daughter was as much of the flesh as the spirit. At the moment, however, the entire family was caught up in the agonizing, protracted death of the eldest and brightest son and had neither the time nor strength to consider Snow's emotional conflicts.

* * * * *

After three years of suffering, Mack - or Bro - died peacefully

on 24 June 1864, at the age of thirty. Snow immediately wrote two letters, one to the Revd. F.D. Maurice and one to Browning, saying that at last her brother was at rest. Both letters began in the same way, but the content was very different. Snow told Maurice: "I no longer have faith. How can we know that there truly is a life hereafter? I do not believe in the virgin birth. I cannot believe in the existence of a living God in the way I believe my human father exists."(9)

To Browning, she wrote:

> Dear and kindest friend,
>
> It brings me as near to a pleasure as anything can in this terrible moment to write to you and tell you that all is peacefully over and that the spirit we have been watching for so long has passed out of the range of our small vision. It was yesterday at three o'clock without pain or struggle of any kind. I have lost a Brother - it seems so natural to write it to you, you who have been to me a Barnabas(10) in such a sorrow as I trust no human being is called upon twice to endure in this life. It seems strange to say so much without fear of misconception, but I go on to say more, and express to you a part of the consolation you have given me. It is that while I have shivered in this cold darkness without a glimmer of hope, or with only a glimmer, I have felt with you in the presence of one who could bear a loss so much greater than mine because the remnant of life was an insignificant break in an intercourse not more secure in the Past than in the Future. I knew the tone of hope, of life, could not exist apart from <u>that</u> knowledge, I knew what a wreck your life would be if you could not discern an opening where I saw only darkness.
>
> I suppose the moonlight trust is all that can be attained by those who walk on the night side of the world, but to them it is a witness to the unseen sun, when nothing else can be... I write to you in the awful stillness that follows that last look. I can only speak as spirit to spirit. Nay, why do I justify myself? for I have no fears of your misconception. I know that the strangeness would strike any one else, but I believe it will seem quite natural to you. I believe that you, from the first, have consciously supplied that place which has for some time been empty to me! That it may be so for a time is my utmost hope, when it ceases to become natural or easy, do not try to continue it, I have a fine ear

> for any strain in intercourse. Remember then that the knowledge of you was a cordial in this swoon of life that is not likely to recur - that I had such a consolation exactly at the moment when I imperiously needed it.
>
> I shall very soon wish to see you again, and perhaps you will let me summon you. You will not wonder to hear that my mother is physically worn out, but I think it is the best thing for her mind. When I see any one, it will be you.
>
> Ever yours gratefully
> Julia Wedgwood(11)

Clearly she received more spiritual comfort from Browning than from any of her religious teachers - Erskine, Maurice or Scott. Her letter to Browning is lengthy and well composed, as if, even in a time of stress and sorrow, she rationally and articulately organized her feelings. Her letter is not only a moving expression of grief and the reaching out to another for human comfort, but it also reflects the intimacy that already existed between them, the passion and complexity of Snow's feelings, and the paradox of her intellectual confidence and her sense of inferiority as a woman. Even more significant is that with uncanny prescience, or perhaps with a self-destructive will to determine the scenario of their relationship, she writes the unhappy ending of the romance nine months before the actual event and, at least from Browning's point of view, before the admission (written or spoken) that their friendship had developed into a love which he wished to consummate.

Browning responded the same day by himself taking a letter around to Cumberland Place, no doubt in the hope of seeing her, but no one in the family was receiving. In his letter he told her:

> ... the circumstances under which I have come to know you may certainly have so operated that, in the meeting of our hands mine has seemed somewhat to lift rather than be lifted by yours. But that has been only a chance - and any day you would help me as much. Simply, I value your friendship for me, as you shall know if you will but wait: and it already seems useless to tell you that wherever I may be of the slightest good to you, it will be my pride and privilege when you count on me. And now - no more

> assurances of this kind from me, nor surely any need for them will you ever feel.(12)

In this he was quite wrong. Snow needed constant reassurance and seemed totally incapable of believing she could ever be at all important to him. - "I dread myself, for I know there is in me an exacting spirit that dries up all the love and kindness which it needs so terribly."(13) She had no more confidence in her worth as a woman than as a novelist. Once she had been wounded, as she had when her father told her that her book "quite gives one a pain in the stomach." - the wound was permanent and fatal. There was a neurotic element in her character that was self-destructive and seemed to demand needless suffering and self-sacrifice. "I find myself imploring bearable pain," she later wrote, "not pleasure."(14)

Since her mother knew of Snow's note to Browning after Mack's death, and of Browning's immediate personal response, Snow decided to show his letter to her. Wishing to allay any suspicions of Browning having matrimonial intentions towards her and to justify her own wish to keep their intimate friendship on the high spiritual plane that she had first dictated, Snow told her mother of the "man-woman" restrictions she had placed on their friendship. Then, naively, she wrote to Browning telling what she had done and noting that her mother was "startled at the unusual course I had taken, hers is a mind to perceive very clearly the objections to it, but as she saw I had lost nothing in your eyes by it, she was satisfied."(15) She also felt impelled to reiterate her conditions to Browning, as if already he had ventured too far: "... if I felt that the mere accident (as I feel it for all its influence on my feelings for you) of your being a man and my being a woman is inimical to its long existence in this personal form, you must remember that what I had before I knew you, perhaps the larger part of your mind, I should still have after our intercourse had ceased."(16)

Browning failed to heed the warning. He replied: "I am glad that you showed my letter to Mrs. Wedgwood. You know well what is the way of the world with any exceptional mode of proceeding: if one wears a white tie instead of a black one, or calls at 10 rather than 5 p.m. - it has something to say and smile about. It is for you to determine when it is right that I should see you."(17)

She determined in a matter of days, and his visits increased in frequency from once to twice a week. Rumours circulated in that gossipy little world of fashionable intellectuals whose ambiguities and self-centredness Jane Carlyle perceived so keenly and with such bitterness. Browning heard the rumours, too; but, with more egotism than common sense, he perceived them as flattering rather than harmful. Snow herself bravely and innocently commented: "A life of silence as mine is (though it is possible to forget it with you) breeds a peculiar indifference towards the opinion of the world. I know not whether it is for good or for evil, but one who never <u>over</u> hears, cares little for and knows little of the surface current of opinion which expresses itself in slight remark."(18)

On 22 July Snow left London for the obligatory round of visits to her relatives. First she went to Leith Hill Place in Surrey, the home of her Uncle Josiah III. This was a sombre house with her silent, autocratic Uncle Joe, her eccentric, secretive Aunt Caroline and their three serious daughters, Sophy, now aged twenty-two, Margaret, aged twenty-one, and Lucy, aged eighteen.

The precious afternoons with Browning were supplanted by an easy and increasingly intimate correspondence. Distance probably made her feel safe from any weakness towards the flesh - and, perhaps, more daring. Having nothing or little to do at Leith Hill Place, she walked in the dense yet familiar woods and felt "the regrets, wishes and weariness of life" disappear. She looked around her at the shrubs and distant hills as if they had changed, and "that is purely because a

fellow creature - not spotlessly perfect by any means - tells me that my absence makes a hole in his life, that I am willing, oh, more than willing, to keep my foothold here, while he cares to have me."(19)

She was hopelessly in love not only with the man Browning but with the myth that surrounded him. That myth, of course, included his dead wife whom she believed, rightly perhaps, to be the true inspiration for his genius. Elizabeth had been all of the things Snow felt were lacking in herself. "Your wife always seems to me so eminently a woman, the maternal, the conjugal relations seem necessary parts of her character, one feels they are expressions of herself. With me, all the relations of life are unfortunate, and I do not feel that it just so happens because the beloved and honoured ones with whom I share them are what they are - but because of something in me which grates against all the material bonds of life."(20)

Had Browning been a less simple man - or perhaps had he not been falling in love again himself - he would have considered her personality more thoughtfully. He would have analysed the reasons behind the limitations she placed on their friendship; he would have questioned her constant reference to their intimacy as "one perpetual farewell." Instead, he asked her for her photograph and assured her that he would always tell her the truth and entertained "no doubt or fear of the future with us two."

Though she had no way of knowing it, the romantic imagery and symbolism in his letters to her were similar to - in some instances, identical with - what he had written to Elizabeth two decades earlier. He spoke to both of the palm tree and palm wine as a metaphor for love between man and woman. Light was used to represent both women - to Elizabeth: "I shall grow old and die with you - as far as I can look into the night I see the light with me." And, when he was abroad, he wrote to Snow: "Write and hold out a light, if I am ever to swim across

the dark strait from Boulogne to the Abydos of Warwick Crescent."[21]

After her stay at Leith Hill Place, Snow went to Falmouth to visit F.D. Maurice's niece and her close friend Julia Sterling. She confided her feelings for Browning to her friend and, at this point, may even have thought of revoking the restriction she had placed on their friendship. Her letters took on a coquettish tone. His letters became more bold. They dissected their emotions, used pet names and fretted about whether the post would bring a letter. She teased him about the difference in their ages - "your grey hairs wd protect you." They continued to refer to "palm wine" as love or affection. He spoke of needing from her "a pin-head-sized drop of wine just now, being out of sorts on various accounts and perhaps no-accounts so I hold up the tip of my finger to catch it as having a right, please observe!"[22] And she replied: "I am not altogether displeased with those no-accounts which sent me an order for a pin-head drop of palm wine today, which I hasten to supply... "[23]

For the first ten days in October she went to stay with her Aunt Rich and the widowed Lady Inglis at their country home in Milton Byran. Aunt Rich had already heard gossip about Snow and Browning and was quite as sharp and critical as she had been about Hensleigh and his attentions to Fanny thirty-five years earlier. She told Snow that she had seen "your Mr. B" at an art exhibition in London and didn't think he looked at all poetical. Snow wrote to Browning: "I thought it hard to be called upon to account for your looks."

The visit was hard in other ways, too, disturbing further her already turbulent emotions. The house itself, in which no one so much as dared to open a newspaper on Sunday, gave a sobering view of the narrow existence of two elderly women with only each other and their cats for company. Snow felt "muzzled" - yet, at the same time, she admired the martyrdom of her Aunt Rich, "speaking of her past happiness -

passionate love whose embers give all the warmth she needs." Mary Rich believed fervently in only one marriage on earth and a spiritual reunion of husband and wife in the next world. Claudius Rich had been dead for forty-two years, yet Snow noted: "So poignant and enduring was her grief that during all my recollections she could never bring herself to use his name."(24)

Browning, too, worried about her and what Aunt Rich and others were saying about them now. He cautioned her: "You know the difficulties will begin soon enough: my visits will seem importunate, be remarked on, the usual course of things must be looked for."(25) Instead of suggesting that he limit his visits or discontinue them entirely, when they were both again in London, he expressed fears about the difference in their ages and that he was preventing her from being interested in others. Clearly he did not believe her vow to remain chaste: "A better than I, God knows, should have the whole palm tree in its season. There, that's said. Meantime, grow and be happy, and let me sit under the branches to my day's end, come what will... Forgive what is stupid in all this, which I dare not re-read: and only mind the main truth that I am ever yours, R.B."(26) Romantic words which clearly indicated to her, as he intended, that he found her desirable as a woman as well as an intellectual companion.

Two months before she was to return to London, Browning took his son Pen for a holiday in France. Before leaving he wrote to her:

> GOODBYE DEAREST FRIEND, I go tomorrow, stay as I very likely have told you, some two months, and see you prominently on the white cliffs, as a landmark for return. We won't teaze each other with any more "last words," but take the good of understanding each other without further labour and pains: I will not be older than you like, nor you younger than I want. I daresay nothing but good will come out of it all to you and me. Remember where I will be till I settle - 151 Rue de Grenelle, Faubg. St. Germ and always inform me exactly where you are. I have been reading your admirable article in the "Reader"

> - admirable, I mean every letter of the word. So, I stretch out my hand for "bread" - had you any fancy of the possible attitude in the future of, Yours ever affectionately, R.B?(27)

Her confidence in the masculine ability to maintain friendship on a purely platonic basis was further shaken that autumn. Less than a year after the death of his wife, the widowed Godfrey, alone with his baby son Cecil, had proposed marriage to Effie, who had refused him. Godfrey then fell into despair, became ill both physically and mentally, and was unfit for work. Various members of the family, including Ras, the Charles Darwins and Snow's own parents, expressed the hope that he would find someone else and remarry soon. Within the family circle only Mary Rich felt that he should never remarry but wait patiently until he was reunited with his wife in the next world.

Snow saw the parallel situation of two widowers with only sons, and remarked upon this to Browning. She noted that she could not help shrinking in imagination from the time when "the absorbing grief shall yield to the mere material want of a new companion. It is so disappointing to see it, it seems to me like a sort of abdication of the rights of immortality..."(28) She made constant references to the perfection of Browning's dead wife and the impossibility of his ever finding another such "window to look direct into the face of Heaven" - as if she were not only reminding him of the restriction she had placed on their friendship but also telling him how he ought to feel about the past.

Mary Rich's influence on Snow was far greater than anyone imagined. Snow postponed her return to London, going instead to Manchester to the Scotts, where she noticed "coincidence" in Scott's illness with that of her dead brother. She became depressed, extended her stay in Manchester and then instead of returning to London went back again to her Aunt Rich at Milton Bryan.

Browning was impatient for her return, and despite her hints of "perpetual farewell," he seemed quite confident of their future together. Snow suggested he call upon her mother, which he did. Fanny and Browning liked one another. From her point of view, though possibly not from Hensleigh's, Browning would certainly have been acceptable as a son-in-law. The difference in age would not have mattered. On the contrary, it probably would have been thought desirable. Probably, Fanny and Browning discussed Snow quite openly, as both of them were worldly and candid in their manner as well as concerned for Snow's future.

Although Browning possessed a genius which Snow certainly did not have, she had a far more complex personality than he. He did not understand her at all. He ignored such warnings as: "I am not feminine, they say"[29] - because this was an almost exact repetition of early discussions with Elizabeth during their courtship. She, too, had been bothered as to which of the two of them was feminine and which masculine.

Sensing an old, familiar argument, he happily replied: "I am feminine, if you are not, and bent consequently on having the last word about that palm wine."[30] He wanted to place her upon a pedestal, a position which made her uneasy and which she refused. Instead, she wished to place him there, but he would have none of it. The endless debate as to who was superior and who was inferior was remarkably parallel to the initial dialogues Browning had had with Elizabeth - a fact which Snow could not have known and which Browning failed to understand; or perhaps he was lulled into a false security by the very familiarity of it all.

Browning's need for self-abnegation was almost as great as Snow's. In Evangelical zeal and romantic aspirations, they were kindred spirits - two strong natures at loggerheads, each reluctant to command, each eager to obey. Snow rightly perceived, as Elizabeth had done before

her, that Browning did not see her as she truly was, but as the personification of the anima within him. He addressed himself through her to an ideal woman of his own creation. This made her uneasy - as Elizabeth, too, had been during his courtship, when she wrote: "May God grant that you never see me as I am."

The crucial difference between Elizabeth and Snow was that Elizabeth saw quite clearly the man Browning was, with all of his flaws as well as his virtues. By some unkind quirk of fate, Snow and Browning shared the same blind inclination to idolatry. Conflict was inevitable. He was a cheerful, hearty optimist; she, though not lacking in humour, was a brooding pessimist. He always expected to be happy - she had never expected it nor believed she was deserving of it. Still, as long as they were apart, they might admire each other from afar until malicious rumour damaged the reality.

When she finally returned to London at the end of November, the Sunday visits were resumed. And so, apparently, was the gossip, which she pretended did not matter. Browning was too absorbed in beginning The Ring and the Book to notice any change in her. She cancelled several of his visits because the younger Darwin children were staying at 1, Cumberland Place and had an illness which might have been infectious. Though he himself had cancelled an earlier visit because of his own illness, he replied by telling her that he had walked to the gates of Regent's Park and looked at her house.

* * * * *

On 1 March 1865, a little over three months after her return to London, Snow sent Browning a long letter which abruptly terminated his visits. She must have taken great pains to do it properly, for she made several drafts of the letter which she failed to destroy. Torn between the spiritual and the physical, she was much concerned that he should not think that she wanted to marry him:

> ... I have reason to know that my pleasure in your company has had an interpretation put upon it that I ought not to allow. I have no doubt the fault has been mine, in incautiously allowing it to be known that I made an object of your visits. You will feel at once that it is a mistake which must be set right by deeds, not words. I am reflecting on myself, not upon you. You have only accepted a position into which I invited you - remember, I invited you. Your attitude has been response from the beginning. In anything now that I may wish otherwise you have no responsibility. I have drawn it upon myself. It is no use asking myself how far such an opinion would affect me if I had no one to consider but myself. Tell me, am I not doing what you would wish if you were in their place? They know that I am the author of all that is peculiar in our intercourse, but I cannot explain this to those others who impute to me anticipations irreconcilable with that fact. I have no reason to think your attitude is misinterpreted but perhaps all the more for this I ought to be careful to correct the view they have of mine. Am I not right, dear friend?(31)

He was stunned. He had not the faintest intention of making a break with her. He had been stimulated by her ideas and unperturbed by the contradictions in her character - all very similar to the ups and downs in his lengthy courtship of Elizabeth. He believed that their relationship was proceeding well until some malicious person began a vicious rumour with the intent of doing <u>him</u> harm. Having been hurt when his work was rejected by critics and publishers alike, he was now at the pinnacle of success, in his prime and finding himself adored by half the fashionable women in London. When she asked him to come no more, he was wounded by what he could only consider as her rejection of him as a man, which he could not truly believe she wanted to do. He had pride, and he replied to her generously:

> I thought from the beginning it was too good to last, and felt as one does in a garden one had entered by an open door, - people fancy you mean to steal flowers. I consider you are altogether right in deciding so - and certainly you are right in being sure I understand you. I shall talk not another word about it: I "withdraw" - beyond my visits - exactly as much of my appreciation of you - as

> having to go to the house no more, I withdraw my knowledge of in what part of London it is situated and whether it look out on trees or a brick wall... I left you to decide (as only yourself could) on what length into the garden I might go: and I still leave it to you. But I would remark - as common sense must, I think - that to snap our outward friendship off short and sharp will hardly cure the evil, whatever it be: two persons who suddenly unclasp arms and start off in opposite directions look terribly intimate. But you know all the circumstances... (32)

Whatever the circumstances were, Snow shared them with Julia Sterling, forwarding to her both a copy of her own letter and of Browning's reply. Julia wrote back, "... what a real effort you must have made in your appeal to him to conceal the fact that your heart had betrayed you. If he guesses, he certainly most honourably ignores it - and makes the path easy to you which you have chosen,"(33)

Browning did not guess anything. Aware of Snow's depressions, her constant harping on the perfection of his dead wife, and her abrupt changes of mood, he probably felt that the cessation of his visits would be only temporary. Later, after the unpleasant rumours had faded, she would change her mind and let him resume the mutually pleasurable visits. Certainly he felt she would want to see his work and that it would be enough to bring them together again.

He could not have been more wrong. They were both victims of their own proud, sensitive natures and of the hypocrisies of the age.

Chapter 6

Linlathen (1865-1867)

> "There is a wide gulf of misery between knowing our fate is hopeless and finding that it is so."
>
> Julia Wedgwood
> An Old Debt

Intellectual ladies are as susceptible to romantic passion and subsequent silly behaviour as women with less lofty minds. Some might say even more so. No sooner had Snow received Browning's gentle acquiescence to her dismissal of him than she regretted her action. She had blundered. When she needed and wanted him most, she had turned him away. She had, in fact, behaved like a complete ninny. Why, when she argued women's rights so earnestly, should she be so conventional and coy?

Browning apparently thought she would come to her senses, for in the month following her dismissal he sent her a manuscript, and, receiving no acknowledgement, then sent her some books. On 20 April she writes to thank him for both, but again she ends the letter by saying the exact opposite of what she feels and by tactlessly referring to what she believes to be his perfect relationship with his dead wife.

> "Dear friend, I thought I should have missed you terribly, and I do miss you, but I have not regretted giving up the pleasure of your visits, and I shall not. Some parts of our intercourse have been almost the best of life to me - specially when you have spoken of your wife - and these do not pass away. Oh, if she had been here when we met! But I will not be so heartless as to bring in my wish into company with your grief, which must move alone.
>
> I have your photograph now to keep company with hers, and I hope one will find its way to your American friend (1) to enable him to compare the real and the ideal. I have felt much tempted to give myself one more sight of the original before we leave town for the summer in 10 days time, but I thought that perhaps my asking you to give it me would frustrate the

> object with which I asked you not to come - so I must fill up that need with the 3 volumes. (2) I have put them on the shelf with the green ones (3) that they may be as close together as the two writers always have been in my mind - and always will be, throughout the large part of life in which my thoughts are busy with you. Farewell, I must stop writing - it seems difficult - but you know everything I am saying, I think, before you read it. Heaven guard you from all further sorrow! I do not see that it can give you much that has been as yet withheld.
> Yours ever affectionately,
> F.J.W. (4)

The fact was, quite simply, that Snow was having a nervous breakdown. Within the space of a year she had lost her beloved brother, her idolized lover and her faith. None of it happened quickly, but over a period of months or years. She suffered from migraine headaches, sleeplessness, exhaustion and depression, alleviated by only brief "pendulumish" swings of mood. She drank brandy alone, at night, to help her sleep. Effie, more than any other, was her confidante. Early on in her illness, Snow had written to Effie who was at Down: "I have felt quite different the last 3 days, quite free from the undesirable feelings I had in the beginning of the week. I cannot express to you how wretched they were. I really felt once or twice as if they must be insanity. You will be sure I shd not use such words lightly - I longed for the pain again which was much more bearable & it was a great relief to me to see what Miss Proctor says of the feeling of exhaustion, but I repeat I have had no more of them since Thursday nor shall have I trust - "(5)

While outwardly Snow had maintained the bright stream of her faith, turbulent eddies had developed underneath. These turbulences surfaced during her depressions and were generally the result of feelings of inadequacy both as a woman and as a human being. One of her difficulties was that while she intellectually challenged or disavowed Christianity, she could not cast off the Puritan conscience which demanded a life of

absolute purity and self denial and which inevitably resulted in the almost daily distress of imperfection, error and moral failure. A lofty and sensitive conscience coupled with an adulation of the heroic or saintly is a sure recipe for unhappiness. Snow constantly aimed at ideals higher than she could attain. She denigrated her achievements and suffered from her short-comings over which she was acutely sensitive. Daily she resolved to overcome the sin of selfishness and was morbidly despondent at her failure, yet she also believed that from the standpoint of survival, as her Uncle Charles advocated, moral sentiments were merely a form of disguised selfishness and therefore not of themselves moral.

The Evangelical influence of the spirit of William Wilberforce, founder of the Clapham sect in which her Mackintosh relatives, including Aunt Rich, had been so active, took root in Snow's conscience in a manner unlike that among her brothers and sisters and cousins who were equally exposed to the Evangelical rhetoric. To her dismay neither her family nor the world in general shared her ideals. Disobedience was to Snow a real sin; to her sister Effie obedience was a matter of choice.

Two other sad events occured in 1865 which distressed Snow - the lingering, painful death from cancer of her friend Hilary Bonham Carter and the sudden, unexpected death of Mrs. Gaskell from a heart attack. Snow's introspective focus on the spiritual condition of the souls of others as well as her own soul naturally led to morbid depression.

Shortly after she wrote the letter to Browning expressing the wish to see him but deciding not to do so, she also wrote to Thomas Erskine, her spiritual mentor in Scotland, confessing to him her doubts about the existence of God and of her despair. Erskine replied to her in a letter dated 18 May, 1865.

"BELOVED SNOW, - I have read over your letter

more than once with deep sympathy. I wish I could say something that might help you. At all events, I know you are in the hands of One who can help you, and who not only sees these dark gropings in you, but who in a certain sense put them there. My own feelings of love and justice give me an assurance that He has them, that He is loving, and just, and I am sure that love and justice must seek to communicate themselves. When I am persuaded that a thing ought to be, I feel certain that it will be sooner or later - not that it will come of itself, but that God will not cease to press until it is accomplished. I am sure that all the good which I feel the want of is in God, and that He makes me feel the want of it that I may look to Him for it with a confident expectation. I feel that we are created to be educated with a perfect sympathy with God, with the living personal Fountain of all goodness. Understanding what I mean, that our education is not into absolute or independent goodness, but a goodness continually to be received through sympathy - fresh every moment - a well of water springing up into everlasting life, so that we may not only have the blessedness of the goodness, but also of that loving sympathy which is constantly supplying it.

... Dear friend, I write these fragmentary sentences from the hope that you may catch hold of something in them which may help you to take hold of God. There is nothing else which can do us any good. If I believe in God, in a Being who made me and fashioned me, and knows my wants and capacities and necessities, because He gave them to me, and who is perfectly good and loving, righteous, and perfectly wise and powerful, whatever my circumstances inward or outward may be, however thick the darkness which encompasses me, I yet can trust, yea, be assured, that all will be well, that He can draw light out of darkness, and make crooked things straight. Without such a thought of God, the consciousness of being embarked in an unending existence, out of which we cannot extricate ourselves, would be a horror insupportable, but I know that He can make it not only supportable, but a real and continual joy and a reason for continual thankfulness.

... Yes, beloved Snow, we shall yet see a moral law of gravitation doing in the world of spirits that which the material law of gravitation does in the visible system of things; we yet shall see the infinite righteous love of God attracting all hearts, and uniting them to Himself and to each other, and filling them all out of his fulness. Farewell....

- Ever yours very affectionately,
T. ERSKINE(6)

It is difficult to comprehend the influence of Erskine on some of the most powerful minds of the age, not only women disciples like Snow and Emily Gurney and on clergymen such as Dean Stanley, Bishop Ewing, A.J. Scott and F.D. Maurice, but also on people like Madame de Staël, John Stuart Mill and Thomas Carlyle. His was a personal influence, expressed through intimate conversations and letters, rather than through sermons or published works. In 1840, when he was aged fifty and at the height of his mature powers, he abruptly retired from public life, never again preaching or writing for publication. He lived with his sisters Christian Stirling and Davie Peterson in Edinburgh and also at Linlathen, outside Dundee, which became a kind of religious retreat. Erskine's letters not only mention private day-to-day events of family and friends or comment upon world events but are inevitably religious tracts which sometimes seem inappropriate to the circumstance of the persons to whom they are addressed and are, in effect, more like monologues or inner debates.

In September of 1865, after she had visited Leith Hill, Down, Milton Bryan, Barlaston and Edinburgh, and before returning to London and the whirl of the social season where she would surely meet Browning, Snow went to Linlathen. She was accompanied by her maid Clarke who took "very good care" of her needs. On 5 September, three days after her arrival, she wrote to her Aunt Rich: "I found Mr. Jowett(7) here when I came but he went yesterday. I was rather disappointed with his appearance, he is so fat. I don't know why a wise man shd not be fat, but some how I disapproved of it in him. Also he came down much too late in the morning which is a sin. But he committed no other but those 2."(8)

She wrote twice weekly, sometimes more often, to her Aunt Rich describing her own doubts and her conversations with Erskine.

> I said 'my difficulty is that I do not see how to reconcile the spirit that the Bible

> demands with the critical spirit ofour time, & yet I feel that this must be a right spirit. All that is valuable in our time is critical.' T.E. 'Yes, we cannot crush it, we must accept it. But the object of criticism is that which is variable. The object of Faith is that which is unchanging, which is Being.' (9)

That Erskine was an intellectual stimulus as well as a spiritual comforter to Snow is undeniable. She placed him upon a pedestal in the same manner that she had with Browning, but, unlike Browning, Erskine was aged seventy-seven, feeble, celibate and immune to feminine charm. He was, quite bluntly, no sexual threat; and Snow, forever in search of the wise and accepting father-figure must have felt secure in his company. She told her Aunt Rich:

> I think what I feel specially valuable in him, distinct from all other religious people I know, is his intense consciousness and realising of all the difficulties and mysteries of this life, combined with his perfect trust in the purpose of this life as education. I know others who have the last, and of course many who have the first, but the union of the two I think I never saw but in him; he looks not across the mysterious gulf of evil merely, but through it. It is not any ignoring, any silence in his spirit about the hideous abyss, but it is seeing an object which makes all worthwile, and a strength that can not only bridge it over, but change it... I feel Mr. Erskine is always saying to himself, as indeed he has said once or twice since I came here, 'It is the best thing that is offered each of us; we cannot see it, but it is the best thing.'...(10)

Snow had come to Linlathen in a depressed state. Depression and its companion, boredom, were to some extent experienced by nearly all educated and affluent Victorians of both sexes. But in Snow there was also a sense of frustration and the awareness of a distance between herself and others whose affection she so desperately wanted and needed, even though she felt herself unworthy of it.

During this three week visit to Linlathen, two important events occured that were to alter the course of her life. Her friendship with Emily Gurney, who was also making the annual pilgrimage to Linlathen

with her mother, developed beyond Christian companionship to shared confidences of intense personal feelings. Even more importantly Snow experienced a religious conversion which abolished her doubts about God and the life hereafter.

A decade after this critical Linlathen visit of 1865, Snow wrote to Emily of the incident that had occurred then.

> I know not why, kneeling at Church to-day, there came to me so vividly the memory of a Sunday 10 years and a half ago, when I felt as if a great joy had burst upon my life. I never had a moment afterwards of that joy of which it seemed the mere dawn, but it has always remained with me as a sort of pattern of the actual sensation. I remember how curiously the years of early childhood were recalled by it, so that now I almost always look at them through the coloured window of that hour's remembrance. All, all past (sic) away in one sense as if it had never been - but in another imperishable - unfading, for ever. (11)

What sort of epiphany this was and whether it had any real effect in deciding the future of her relationship with Browning is a mystery. Her enigmatic language is further obscured because in later years, when Snow edited the letters which Emily had chosen for publication[12] the two paragraphs that followed were eliminated. Still, whatever she experienced and so ambiguously described in a Wordsworth-style not only remained a clear insight ten years later but immediately lifted her from the morbid depression which her family and friends had thought a nervous breakdown.

After she left Linlathen, Erskine wrote a letter to her dated 5 October 1865:

> BELOVED SNOW, - I thank God that He was pleased to give you any help through your visit to us. I have a perfect assurance that there is always infinite help and comfort in Him, and that all will finally come to know this; but I often feel desponding enough for the details. I hope you will learn, what I am always hoping to learn, to rejoice in God continually,

> knowing that He is really ordering all your circumstances to the one end of making you a partaker of His own goodness and bringing you within His own sympathy. I thank you for your love; it is most precious to me; and for your offer of service, which I should like to profit by if I knew how, but I am so stupid that I cannot receive help from another - I need to do things in my own way, and yet I can't do them.
>
> I am glad that you are with Mrs. Rich; I should like well to be of the party. Give her our most affectionate regards. She has not many older friends now, or who love and value her more. My sisters send you their love. If we live a little longer we may perhaps see you again in this world. - Ever affectionately yours.
> T. ERSKINE.(13)

Snow had not followed her original plan of returning to London by way of Shrewsbury to visit her Darwin cousins Susan and Catherine[14] who were both in poor health, but once again she visited her Aunt Rich and Lady Inglis in Milton Bryan. When she reached London a week later her preoccupations were different from what they had been six months earlier. The family felt that she was a very different person. Still isolated by her deafness and by her puritanical beliefs, she was none the less more cheerful and less nervous. Her friend Julia Sterling wrote to Effie:

> I had indeed gathered from my dear Snowie's own letters that things had taken a better turn with her, but it did me the more good to learn from you that the improvement was not merely a clearing up in her own mind & heart but that it showed itself as a healthy influence over her daily life & ways. Let me entreat you, my dear Effie, not to be too disgusted or disappointed if there come <u>downs</u> again after this little interval of <u>ups</u> - One does not conquer the faults which have grown with one's strength or in one effort; & you must I think be prepared for relapses & depressions with poor Snow, which will discourage <u>her</u> quite as much as any of us onlookers - only I am sure it will be the best help to her to feel that you are somewhat in sympathy with her struggle & ready to make the best of her victories & to shield her defeats. What you say about her being better with her Mother than formerly is the best comfort I have ever had about her. There

> is now in her letters a vein of humility so much more healthy than the self-disgust that used (as I have often told her) to stand in the place of humility that I cannot help hoping she is standing on truer ground.(15)

Snow avoided almost all social activities, no longer taking an interest in balls or soirées or dinner parties. She thereby avoided meeting Browning who must have anticipated that their breach would now be healed and their intimacy renewed. In her last letter to him she had even said that she was tempted to give herself one more sight of him, but what he mistook as flirtatiousness and feminine temperament were now, if they had not been then, something quite different.

* * * * *

In piecing together the life of any person dead for more than half a century, there are certain gaps where documents are missing and where isolated scraps of truth or half-truths make no sense by themselves. Iris, Lady Wedgwood[16] who knew Snow in her latter years, fortunately gives credence to what the family, and in particular Effie and Hope, who outlived their sister by more than two decades, believed happened. Iris said that Browning and Snow did meet again and that Browning proposed marriage, but that Snow with her excessive piety refused him, though she later regretted this decision. Where and when this important meeting took place and whether it was through chance or through Browning's instigation isn't known, but it must have occurred in the winter of 1865 or early in 1866 and certainly it would not have been at Cumberland Place. Why they did not thrash out the reasons behind her dismissal of him or why Snow continued to believe, if she really ever did, the gossip about them is puzzling. Her refusal to marry him was no doubt in part the result of her religious conversion at Linlathen. Possibly she had been convinced of the reunion of souls in the life hereafter. Certainly she believed in self-sacrifice as the ultimate good.

Both Browning and Snow had proud natures, and both were victims of

the hypocrisies of the times. Depression again settled upon Snow; the world was not, as Erskine taught, all bright and beautiful.

* * * * *

The Macmillan Publishing Company approached Snow to write a biography of John Wesley which was to be part of a series of books on the lives of famous Englishmen aimed at the general reading public and as educational books for young people. Snow accepted this commission because any theologian who had received the call, suffered and borne witness, greatly interested her. She began work on the biography of Wesley by establishing a rigid work schedule of rising at five a.m., praying for an hour, writing for two hours in the morning after breakfast, reading and researching for three hours in the afternoon, then praying again for an hour in the evening after supper. Her father was less concerned with Wesley than with her "foolish novels" and apparently did not demand that she submit her work chapter by chapter for his approval as he had done with An Old Debt. A second edition of An Old Debt was issued in 1866. Obviously the novel had been popular or it would not have been reprinted, but Snow's hypersensitivity and feelings of inadequacy are reflected in the new Preface to the second edition.

> Among the notices which the following Novel attracted at the time of its appearance, the writer recalls one or two which assumed as her aim the delineation of a faultless character and judged it, therefore, as belonging to a class of fiction, more common a few years ago than at present, which tended to exalt sacrifice as a good in itself apart from the result. In looking over these pages she has felt that a mere sketch of character needed more distinctness of intention than is apparent in them and has perceived the confusion between an ideal of perfection, and the influence of one mind upon another. The latter appears to her the true interest of fiction, which, where its scope is well understood, will be confined to delineation of particular aspects of character, leaving the moral estimate of the dramatis personae an open question.

* * * * *

In June of 1866 Snow, accompanied by a new maid Louisa, returned to Linlathen with the specific purpose of serving as Erskine's secretary, assisting him in putting together his thoughts into essays, later to be assembled into a book. Erskine by this time was nearly blind, partially deaf and in poor health both mentally and physically. He suffered from a heart condition, but more disturbing were his spells of severe depression frequently followed by fits of violent activity, ~~in which he seemed more possessed by the Devil than by God.~~ Only one who believed devoutly in the Holy Ghost would have attempted the impossible task of assembling Erskine's cloudy, incoherent thoughts.

On 23 June, 1866, Snow wrote to her Aunt Rich: "I feel I can really help him if he will obey me... the misfortune is his immense wish to retouch - he takes all the sap out of what he writes by going over all the fragments."(17)

Erskine was incapable not only of completing an essay, but of completing a paragraph. He would go over a single sentence compulsively for hours at a time. Finally Snow took the manuscript as he had originally dictated it and hid the pages from him. She told him that she would edit the manuscript in private and return it to him for final corrections. Erskine protested and began referring to her as his "Governess" rather than his "Beloved Daughter."

Snow suffered a recurrence of "sharp, nervous headaches" which she recognized were brought on by frustration; but knowledge in itself was not a cure. One day she went into Dundee to a doctor to have herself "galvanized," and returned to find that Erskine had searched her room, found the manuscript, got someone to read it to him and was so dissatisfied that he began to rewrite it all over again. Snow protested, taking the manuscript back from him and hiding it in a different place. Again when she was out of the house, he searched for it, found it and destroyed it.

Snow was exasperated, but Erskine explained that his irrational behaviour was the result of his grief for his sister Christian, who had died the past December. If one believed, as Snow did, that a Divine such as Erskine was possessed by the Holy Ghost and destined to guide less worthy mortals, such as herself, it was of course a weakness on her part to allow any expression of critical or hostile feelings towards him. She was given the opportunity for more self-sacrifice. Thus, with true Christian forbearance she assured Erskine that she would gladly and humbly begin a new manuscript with him the following summer.

Erskine was cunningly aware of the difficulties he had caused Snow. Six weeks after she had left Scotland, he wrote to her:

> BELOVED SNOW, - We have returned to Edinburgh for the winter, and I have been looking over my papers where I find such an exhibition of kind and loving patience on your part towards me that I am quite overwhelmed. It would be a relief to me to think that you had got anything for yourself that could compensate your trouble, beyond the blessedness of goodness and kindness.
>
> I return you my loving thanks and best wishes that the blessings which you need may be given to you.
>
> My eyes are getting very dim, and I often fear that they will scarcely serve me to finish the book, which seems never to get nearer its conclusion, in spite of continual writing... (18)

Having returned to London in a depressed frame of mind, Snow retreated more and more from society, apparently seeing few people except her family, Emily Gurney and the Maurices. She attended Maurice's services at St. Peter's, Vere Street, and visited Mrs. Maurice who was in poor health and was living in Cambridge where Maurice had been appointed Professor of Moral Philosophy. (Three days of the week he was in Cambridge, four days in London.)

* * * * *

Fanny was disturbed by her daughter's religious absorption and prolonged depression which must have evoked memories of her own mother's

withdrawal and despondency. Fanny had idolized her own father and was secure in the knowledge that she was his favourite child and the favourite child of her unhappy mother as well. Snow and Hensleigh had no such rapport and affection. Snow, who had seemed such a precocious little girl now seemed simply different with an almost abnormal need to be of service. She was not the favourite of either parent or of her Uncle Ras, and she knew it. All three of the daughters were clever and energetic - far more so than their brothers - but both Effie and Hope were charming and attractive in a way that Snow was not. Some of the nervousness and seriousness no doubt came from Snow's handicap of deafness. Still, now that all of her children were grown and Snow fast settling into the stereotype of the tiresome, anxious old maid, Fanny wanted to do all she could to secure her eldest daughter's happiness. In May of 1867 she once again invited Browning to dinner at Cumberland Place. Instead of replying to Fanny, Browning, who probably assumed that Snow had persuaded her mother to invite him, wrote directly to Snow:

> Dear Miss Wedgwood,
>
> The last time you wrote to me you bade me remember I had offered to show you my Poem (19) before it should be published: it is nearly three years since then, and you may well have changed your mind about caring to see the thing - but I don't suppose so, after all - at any rate, it is for me to say that the poem will probably go to press in the autumn, and I will send you the proofs as I get them: from the way I work, it is not in my power to send a proper transcript, such as should give the thousands of lines a fair chance of being run through, - eighteen thousand, so far as I know! - Nobody has seen one of all these - and I mention the length to account for the delay in getting done, - besides there have been spaces of interruption, months at a time. Not that the thing <u>is</u> altogether done yet, nor by a good deal, - but I expect four months' more work will suffice.
>
> But I talk about it thus prematurely because I get thereby the opportunity of

answering, if your kindness permit, a
note from Mrs. Wedgwood which embarrasses
me somewhat: it is just an invitation to
dine, - and I can't resolve to make any
banal excuse, nor yet seem fussy and
foolish. The truth is best said. I
underwent great pain from the sudden
interruption of our intercourse three (20)
years ago: not having the least notion
why that interruption must needs be, then
or now, I shrink - altogether for my own
sake - from beginning again, without
apparent reason, what may be stopped once
more as abruptly and as painfully without
reason one whit more apparent. You
understand me, I know - will you make Mrs.
Wedgwood understand that I am most
grateful for her goodness, and grieved that
I cannot - in simple justice to myself -
have the gratification she would give me?
Indeed, I am sure you will, - and want no
formal answer any more than you want the
assurance that I am
Ever yours,
Robert Browning(21)

Though he had said that he wanted no formal answer, Snow wrote to him on 17 May, 1867, beginning the letter without salutation:

It has given me a lively pleasure to see
your handwriting again, dear friend, and
to receive your kind offer, though prepared
by the fiction that I may well have
changed my mind, etc. - in which but you
added 'I don't suppose so' I should be
tempted to suspect you had forgotten
Captain Absolute's advice not to tell
more lies than are necessary!(22)

I wish I might see the MS; you greatly
underrate my powers of deciphering
obscurities if you suppose them exceeded by
a mere printer's devil, and surely the form
would suit the matter all the better if it
gave scope for a few hypothetical readings.
But I shall be very glad to exercise my
ingenuity upon it any way at any time. I
have often longed since our last meeting
for opportunity and sarcasm to remark on
the long delay of the appearance of your
Italian, but I consoled myself by wanting
the first by the recollection that
certainly the last would fail me.
Nevertheless I am disappointed not to see
you again - but why waste pen and ink in
telling you what you know so well? I did
not know my Mother had asked you, so the
disappointment is the less. I will tell

her what you say - do as you think best, dear friend; I only wish to see you again a long way after wishing things to be just as you like. This is very far from being the case in large matters, happily it is not impossible in such small ones as all that relates to
Yours ever,
F.J.W.

I have seen you twice in the street since we parted, but I did not think that a favourable opportunity for my attack!(23)

What did Browning make of that astonishing postscript? Indeed having been dismissed from calling upon her and then having his proposal of marriage refused, he must have been both surprised and wary. It is worth remembering that postscripts are often not afterthoughts at all but really what the writer wants most to say, yet because of emotional uncertainties, can't adequately express. Still, the word "attack" seems quite out of character - possibly indicating that her breaking off of their friendship and refusal of marriage were not as permanent as she had first said. The contrast or ambivalence of the self-effacing last sentence in her letter to Browning and the self-assertion of the postscript reflects her inner conflict. She wanted a relationship with him - whether as wife or friend - yet in each capacity she believed herself unworthy of him.

Whether Snow actually had connived with her mother, or whether, as she said, her mother had acted without her knowledge mattered little in the outcome. Browning's response was honest; he was hurt by her rejection, which he still did not understand, and he did not wish to be hurt again for no understandable reason. He does leave the door slightly open by saying that he will send her the proofs of his poem which no one else has seen; yet, he is on his guard when he says that it is not within his power "to send a proper transcript." She might request it immediately, become more involved in criticisms at a stage in the composition when changes could be made more easily. On the other hand, had Snow responded differently - if, instead of flippantly declaring "you greatly underrate my powers of deciphering obscurities

if you suppose them exceeded by a mere printer's devil," she had told him that she felt privileged to see the poem, that she wanted to help him and that she could understand the manuscript as well as the printer, it is possible Browning would have agreed. As it was, two hypersensitive individuals mistook the other's intentions. Since Browning had no proofs to send then, there was no more communication between them for another eighteen months.

Chapter 7

To Be a Pilgrim (1867-1868)

> "I suppose we have all our right focus but Fate will not always allow of our being arranged therein & we must occasionally print bad photographs on the minds of our friends which is not easy always to tear away."
>
> Julia Wedgwood to Ellen Tollett

Snow returned to Scotland in the summer of 1867 but remained in Edinburgh, staying with one of Erskine's other young women disciples Jane Gourlay. Erskine was also in Edinburgh, but, after the death of his only other sister Davie Paterson, he procrastinated further on writing his book. His physical condition improved, although he was in a state of bereavement which never left him. His nephew James Paterson, his wife, their three children and Jane Gourlay, who was tutor to the Paterson children, took up permanent residence at Linlathen, and Erskine joined them there in the autumn of 1867. From letters written during this period he seemed particularly immersed in the doctrines of St. Paul and in the symbolism of rivers. Death, according to St. Paul as interpreted by Thomas Erskine, is the entrance to Life. The meaning of Life is to be found in Death (which explains in part the Victorian fascination with witnessing deathbed scenes) and the greatest act an individual can perform is to give his life for some "higher cause", as Christ did. In a letter to Snow dated 19 September, 1867, Erskine spoke of the river Tay at Perth:

> ... It is just of a right size, quite graspable, but deep and strong and living, rapid and yet unbroken. Like the Rhone and the Rhine, it comes out of a lake, quite pure and full-grown. I think it more companionable than these are, because not so large. When you come again you must try to get acquainted with him (the river.) I have been also seeking deeper and more intimate acquaintance with the

> Creator of all things, with my Creator, whose hands made me and fashioned me, and whose continual care of me is necessary to my existence. My spiritual life, I am sure, must consist in love, and there can be no other ever present, ever embracing love but His.
> - Ever affectionately yours,
> T.ERSKINE(1)

Desperately in need to be of service to someone, Snow took refuge in the sheltered world of spas and elderly invalids. She accompanied Mrs. Maurice to Bath, though she found her company dull. Since the death of Scott in January of 1866 and the extraordinary personality change in Erskine, Snow's interest in Maurice as a theologian and spiritual guide intensified, though Maurice never held quite the power over her that Erskine did. That her duty toward her parents was more self-imposed than required is evidenced a few months later when her parents declined her offer to accompany them to Baden Baden, and Snow wrote to her Aunt Rich that she supposed they did not think her "a competent courier."

She finished her biography of Wesley in the early months of 1868, which resulted in a disagreement with the publisher and severe disappointment. No doubt the misunderstanding was due partly to Snow's not hearing properly and partly due to her own personal desire to understand Wesley's theological concepts in depth. Macmillan's said that the book was much too difficult and intellectual for the popular series planned. Snow was devastated. While she was always expecting rejection in her writing, as in everything else, this was the first time she had actually experienced it. As usual, several of her friends and family including Effie, Hope, Meta Gaskell, Jane Sterling, Alice Bonham Carter and Henrietta Darwin had praised it highly. In May, Henrietta, whom the family affectionately called Harriot, wrote to Snow suggesting that her father submit the book through his publisher. On 24 May, 1868, Snow replied:

My dear Harriot,

How very kind of Uncle Charles! I am sure it more than counterbalances all the vexation I have had about the book to see how much kindness & sympathy it has brought out among my old friends. Alice wanted to help me publish it, which of course I wd not hear of. Uncle Charles's equally kind offer I will accept most gratefully, & I send a short description of the manuscript which I think will enable any publisher to understand the kind of thing. It wd certainly be a very great help to me to get a publisher's opinion, even if I cd not get one to undertake it. I do not consider as yet that I have had a perfectly unbiased opinion, my own friends being probably biased for it, & Macmillan, on seeing that it was so unsuited for his purpose, against it. I quite think I was to blame in the matter. Of course I think them to blame, too, but people always do that in a misunderstanding. I began with being much interested in the subject, & intensely wishing to write about it. This made me jump at the suggestion of undertaking it, without much consideration of the class of readers I was addressing, & when simplicity was continually urged upon me, I was satisfied with taking care, as I thought that every sentence was distinct. When I had once given my title I too much felt safe in thinking I had implied the nature of the subject.(2) I see now that if I had not been eager & preoccupied I might have known that this kind of series must be addressed to young or half-cultivated people - the very name wd deter a thoughtful reader. This, you see, was not their fault, & I feel bound to make this clear. I have no doubt if they went & explained it to somebody I shd seem to have acted shamefully! If Uncle Charles will carry out his kind offer so far as to enclose this description to Murray I shall be deeply grateful.(3)

Hensleigh, whose first publisher was Trübner and who had many friends in the publishing world, apparently offered no help. Charles Darwin did recommend the book to Murray,[15] who were interested, but at about the same time Macmillan had a change of heart and, requesting a few changes and additions that would make the book even more scholarly, decided to publish it independently of the series.

* * * * *

In September of 1868, Jem (James) Paterson, fearing that his uncle was dying, wrote to Snow and told her that Erskine was asking for her.

She left for Scotland immediately and on 21 of September wrote to her Aunt Rich: "I cannot conceal from you that the cloud seems to me to grow darker. He feels of course an ardent longing to be taken out of this world, he has just expressed it to me so sadly in bidding him goodnight, but immediately checked himself when I said God wd take him if it were the time."(4)

Erskine in his dark moods could be trying to even the most pious of his disciples, and a week later, on 28 September, 1868, Snow, who was reading George Eliot's Felix Holt when she was alone, wrote to Aunt Rich: "I feel such a great blessing in turning to something at times that has nothing to do with Christianity. The great problems of our relation to God through Christ seem to me so much more distinct and full of meaning when we are not constantly occupied with them."(5)

Erskine's condition worsened. Snow was more his nurse and confessor than his amanuensis. On 31 October, 1868, she wrote to Aunt Rich: "I am grieved to send you such a sad account. I feel somewhat arid & flat & can hardly tell you even what little there is to tell. Our comfort must be in the sense of an infinite love & an infinite future, in which all this dark misery shall be drowned. God does not cease to be, when we cease to be conscious of his presence. I was trying to say that to him today. I can write no more tonight. I will not fail again, but will try to deserve the character of your faithful F.J.W."(6)

Erskine seemed at times in need of reassurance of the truth of his own teachings. His "dark spells" became increasingly severe, and he turned against his nephew, believing that Jem was trying to cheat him of his money and rob him of his possessions - somewhat extraordinary accusations from one who professed to have no desires or uses for material objects. Life at Linlathen was a never-ending tirade at troublesome trivia, and Snow was withdrawing into one of her own gloomy depressions when unexpectedly, she received a letter from

Browning dated 30 October, 1868. Sent first to Cumberland Place it was forwarded to her at Linlathen.

> Dear Miss Wedgwood,
>
> From one cause or another, my poem - or rather, part of it - is only ready and readably plain <u>now</u>: I sit waiting the revises which are to go to America to-day. It is not necessary to tell you, - beginning with the lowest consideration, - that I was anxious for the help of your opinion, and what more you might choose to give me: <u>that</u> will be too late, now, for what is printed and done with. But the hindrances were too much for me, you will believe, without needing that I describe them. The results are that the thing will go forth in four volumes, one a month, beginning next December. But as the Americans chose to insist on printing two in one, I send them the second volume also. My friend Milsand(7) who visited me last spring, read the first and second <u>parts</u> of the first volume: the Publisher(8) and, I believe, his wife, examined the two volumes so as to know how to treat them: nobody else has seen a line: so that I nearly begin as I intended - asking, whether I may send you the said two volumes at any time next week? You will show them to no one - out of your family, I add for form's sake.
>
> Now, I shall have your sympathy, whatever be the appreciation my work meet with; also, if you please to criticise it, I shall be as sure of your honesty: but I may beg - not so much for your courage, as your confidence in my own somewhat stiffish texture of mind, and my ability to bear banging, if you see cause to bestow it. I will endeavour to let you have the remainder of the poem in time to make immediate use of whatever correction of yours I may wish to adopt. Even in the present case, there will presumably be a second edition - and the opportunity, I lose now.
>
> It is more than a year since I heard from you - remember, I have no means of knowing that this application comes inopportunely, should it do so. You may be absent, too: but this direct way of writing is better than inquiring through friends. I trust you are well and that you will inform me on that point.
>
> Ever yours truly,
> Robert Browning(9)

While Browning maintains a polite distance, distinctly different from the exuberance of his earlier letters, he does still seek her advice and, considering his own touchy ego, concedes quite a lot by suggesting that her corrections might be adopted for the remainder of

the poem. There is also something moving in his stating that "this direct way of writing is better than inquiring through friends" and his request that she inform him about herself. He may not care as ardently as he did five years earlier, but, plainly, he does still care.

How people so perceptive about feelings and nuances in others can be so obtuse where their own emotions are involved is difficult to imagine. The first sentence of Snow's reply, dated 2 November, 1868 and beginning without salutation, is but one more instance of her nurturing old wounds and encouraging further rejection, as though he, not she, was solely to blame for the breach between them.

> How kind of you to remember me still, dear Mr. Browning. I need hardly say with what delight I receive the Volumes (will you send them me here by post?), which I have looked for eagerly now for some time. The reading will form a very helpful distraction to my occupation here - watching a painful deathbed. I have just been feeling that I needed some infusion of new life; now you will give it me, as you have so often before. I often remember your injunction which, in this house, I shall have no temptation to break, and will drink my wine in private like the most confirmed drunkard.
>
> I feel dreadfully afraid of the perusal. I so long that this shall be your best gift to the world, as it is to be so much the largest, and are such longings ever satisfied? You, yourself, I know give it the largest share of your approval, but I doubt how much that implies, concave and convex especially so. I know the outline of the story (you told me) but one has a poor judgement of the necklace from the thread.
>
> Your letter gave me some amusement, as well as very much pleasure. I do not often get any one to "play at horses" with me now. Well, we small creatures enjoy it now and then, and lend ourselves to the game with such zest that we deceive ourselves. Perhaps you will find me a good foolometer. No, I retract that perhaps. I cannot believe my understanding of you is any gauge of the world's.
>
> I am glad you had M. Milsand with you - it gives me pleasure to hear of old friends meeting. I wish you had told me that all was well with you and your son. You know how near that welfare lies to the wishes of yours ever,
> Julia Wedgwood(10)

In her letter there is the same proud arrogance - "I cannot believe my understanding of you is any gauge of the world's" - in direct contrast to the self-humbling style of the rest of the letter. She does not tell him, as he requested, that she is well but instead subtlely reproaches him for not telling her that all is well with him and his son.

Browning must certainly have cared for her to overlook her irritating projections of her own faults on to him, but, like most lovers, he read into her words what he wanted to read - that she wished their old friendship resumed just as it had been five years ago. Perhaps she had intended this when she wrote "it gives me pleasure to hear of old friends meeting." Browning replied immediately by sending her the first two volumes of The Ring and the Book and by writing another letter in which he willingly told her what had happened in his life since they parted - the deaths of his father and his sister-in-law Arabel Barrett, his only sister Sariana now lives with him, and his son Pen will soon be going to Christ Church, Oxford, instead of to Balliol as Browning had wished. This letter dated 5 November, 1868, ends with the same spontaneity and warmth that characterized his earlier letters.

> ... You know, I wish you were in Scotland for
> any other reason than you give.
> What are the conventionalities and decencies?
> My sister keeps house here and people come to see
> her sometimes, - women-people: is the notion that
> I might see you, so - a birth of this memorable
> Gunpowder-treason-and-plot-day(11) fraught with
> fire and brimstone?
> Here or there, or wherever I possess my soul,
> I am, dear friend,
> Yours ever,
> R.B.(12)

Once again the pendulum has swung in the opposite direction. Now it is Browning who tentatively suggests that they might meet again. Incredibly Snow ignores his gentle hint of an invitation to call upon his sister, once more turning him away without explanation, nor does she tell him anything about her own personal life except, once again, in

a postscript: "I have written at night: the daylight hours are spent in the sick room. I mention it as an excuse for diffuseness. One wants time to condense."(13) Instead of responding positively to the resumption of their friendship on a face to face basis, she writes pages of perceptive yet severe criticism of his work.

> ... You seem to me hardly, if at all, liable in this work to the stock reproach against you: the design is perfectly clear, and there are not many details, if any, that are not equally distinct. You give a stereoscopic view (only it is a case of more than two eyes, so the simile breaks down) and the solidity is quite satisfactory.
>
> Perhaps this very clearness only brings out the grumble which has always mixed itself with my delight in what you utter. Do you remember once saying to me that your Wife was quite wanting in - I am not sure of the exact words, but the sense was, the scientific interest in evil? - I think you said the physiology of wrong. I feel as if that interest were in you unduly predominant. I well remember your speaking with strong dissent, with which I entirely sympathized, of that kind of moral science which thinks it can fill up the valleys without lowering the hills. I know the depth of the valleys <u>is</u> the height of the hills. I know that we can only discern the white against the black. But hatred and scorn of evil, though it be inseparable from the love of good, ought not surely to predominate over it? I know it does with the natural man. One takes the good for granted, one exclaims when it comes to an end, everywhere it is the evil that seems positive. But I look upon the Poet as essentially the <u>super</u>natural man, and I complain of him when he only mirrors our weakness.(14)

Browning bore both the personal rebuff and the criticisms of his work with considerable grace.

> I will promise never to spare you of my gratitude if you engage never to doubt whether I think your gifts true gold. It ought to be so, between us. But if you won't <u>begin</u> by leaving off, I won't (child-fashion), so I formally tell you I value your criticism, over and above its being an utterance of yours, beyond what words are likely to make you believe. In this case, I think you do correctly indicate a fault of my nature - not perhaps a fault in this particular work, artistically regarded: I believe I do unduly like the study of morbid cases of the soul, - and I will try and get

> over that taste in future works; because, even if I still think mine was the proper way to treat this particular subject, - the objection still holds, "Why prefer this sort of subject?" - as my conscience lets me know I do.(15)

While Browning was analysing the nature of evil, Erskine was earnestly seeking the highest moral good with the love of God which passeth all knowledge. In a sense he was successful. Much to the surprise of the Linlathen circle, including no doubt Erskine himself, for he had told his friends and followers that he had made his peace with the world and was now going to join his Maker, he rallied from his deathbed and once again took to wandering through the gloomy halls of Linlathen mourning his two sisters - "As I go to bed at night I have to pass two empty rooms which I never passed before without entering them."(16)

With Erskine miraculously recovered, Snow left Linlathen on 3 December 1868 to return to Cumberland Place for Christmas with her family. The literary correspondence with Browning continued, her criticisms becoming more sharp and his acceptance of them less good-natured.

> I have delayed sending my next volume - you well know why! Still, I do send it at last, though for no bad reason: for I know how, the sending seems a repetition of the cruel joke of the judge, "I sentence you," he said to an offender, "to be whipped from one end of the town to the other!" - "Thank you, you have done your worst!" - "And back again!" added the judge. So, you have thought the worst was over, - so, you get this!(17)

Snow did not take the hint and soften the tone of her criticism. Instead it almost seems as if she wanted to provoke him.

> ... For instance, look at page 73. Surely the death bed narrative of an illiterate girl should be understandable at once. I may be extra stupid, but I cannot make out the construction of the sentence beginning, "I did think, do think" etc. It seems to me as if it wanted a predicate. It must be some stupidity of mine, but surely the fact that it is possible to puzzle over it in reading it carefully is so far a condemnation of the presentment of the

> character. It seems to me one of the many instances where your thoughts overflow the dramatic channel... It is your lending so much of yourself to your contemptible characters makes me so hate them. I cannot endure to hear your voice in these Advocates' pleadings. Certainly you present us with a wonderful variety of mud; the defence is even more hateful than the attack. The impure medium is wonderfully brought out in the contrast between that sullied image seen through it and the picture in all its native purity. I can not venture to tell you all that Pompilia(18) seems to me. I felt as if it were only half yours, but indeed I do not divide the other influence(19) from your own... I have a wonderful sense that you can drop some grain into these muddy thoughts, that will make them clear, clearer than they are to myself. It seems arrogant after all these years to expect it, but I cannot help expecting it. I rest with a confidence I can hardly justify to myself on your understanding me - on your having always understood me - and that even if you have half-forgotten me, whatever you remember is just.(20)

Browning's patience has been exhausted. He begins his reply: "I make haste to say, with unfeigned satisfaction, that you are quite right about the faulty passage at page 73 - there is a line dropped out... of my mind, rather than the M.S.... " and then he goes on for half a dozen pages to justify his position of describing the evil in human nature as fully as he describes the good, a position to which Snow takes exception. "It is a shame," he tells her, "that when there is anything you contrive to like in it, you cry out, 'It's not yours, you know - only half yours,' and so on: then comes an ugliness, and 'Ah, there you are at home, - there, I see you at work!' - you comment. Unfair, - because if the good is not mine (as you fancy) in the sense that it is copied from a model, - why may not the ugliness be copied too, and so not be mine either?" At the end of his letter, he makes reference to the personal remark in her last letter.

> Now, in another key, "Even if you (sic: he meant I) have half-forgotten you whatever I remember is just?" Are you dramatic here, and who is it supposed I half forget? I think, on the whole, it is probable we shall never meet again face to face. Depend on it, I keep what I gained,

> and shall never part with an atom of it. It was foolish of whoever or whatever deprived me of what would have done good to me and harm to nobody: but good remains, as Pompilia says, and I shall use it up to the end of,
> Yours,
> R.B.(21)

Snow was deaf, in a double sense, to Browning's entreaties; she did not answer his letter, and two weeks later on 12 February, 1869, he sent her the final part of the poem - "my last trial of your patience"- accompanied by a brief letter in which he said: "I was startled the other day at a house where I dined for the first time, - the Spottiswoodes', -- by hearing that "the Wedgwoods" were expected afterward: I had to go away elsewhere, and don't know what came of the promise: I should not like to meet you that way, however."(22)

Had she contrived a meeting because he had said that it was probable they would not meet again face to face? It would certainly be typical of the alternating retreat-pursuit cycle that was the pattern of their relationship. How desperately did she want to see him? Would seeing her again face to face have truly been so upsetting to Browning that he purposely left the party early, or was he really intending to leave early anyway? If she had attempted to arrange a seemingly chance meeting, she certainly wanted their relationship resumed on the old basis. If the prospect of her presence disturbed Browning enough to cause him to depart, he still cared for her and still felt the effects of wounded pride.

In her next letter to him, predictably and infuriatingly, she makes no mention of the near-miss of their meeting at the Spottiswoodes. Yet, ten days later, after she had finished reading his complete poem and again reiterated her criticism of not being able to sympathize with his choice of a subject, she mentions almost casually: "I never go out anywhere except to my intimate friends when they are alone; even if I were in the habit, I would avoid it, knowing your wish."(23) However much she cherished her self-inflicted wounds, surely she was not

serious in suggesting that she would give up all social activities simply because they moved in the same circles and might accidentally meet and cause him embarrassment. Surely she was merely reiterating the tiresome theme of how unworthy of him she was and how subservient she was to his wishes.

Writers often project their own emotional conflicts into whatever they are writing, and Snow was no exception. When she returned from Linlathen in December of 1868, she put aside her work of revising the life of Wesley to write an essay on Female Suffrage which was to be included in a book of Feminist Essays being edited by Josephine Butler.(24)

Snow had met Josephine Butler, a pioneer in humane treatment for prostitutes and unwed mothers, through Annie Clough, whose brother the poet Arthur Clough had married Blanche Smith, Snow's old school friend and the niece of Florence Nightingale. Annie Clough herself was a strong supporter of women's rights and the first principal of Newnham College, Cambridge. Almost all of the leaders in the movement for the Higher Education of Women knew each other personally. Josephine Butler had been a strong advocate of women's suffrage and had helped J.S. Mill collect names for a petition presented to Parliament in 1866, which Snow had signed.

Naturally Snow was in favour of giving women the vote, just as she was in favour of higher education for women, though she emphasized the point that men and women should complete rather than compete. Having stated that women lived within a social framework that made marriage their only career, she went on to discuss some of the inevitable results of this limitation, beginning with a situation remarkably parallel to the problem she had experienced with Browning.

> The most obvious, perhaps, though not the most important (result) is that it makes friendship between men and women, for average specimens of both, impossible. We all know instances of such friendship, no doubt, and in their power of enriching life they make so much impression upon us, that we are apt to forget they belong

> only to the exceptions of humanity. The fact that a man with nothing particular about him should be on terms of intimate friendship with a woman with nothing particular about her is, I venture to say, unheard of.(25)

Like many other women writers of her age, Snow accepted the patriarchal attitude that women were physically, intellectually and morally quite different from men, and being different, of course, meant being inferior, though there were individual exceptions. Considering herself to be an exception was in no way an advantage or even a consolation; it simply made being a woman all the more difficult.

> If our standard for man's and woman's education were on a level, if it was the natural thing for an intellectual woman to give as much time and energy to study as it is for an intellectual man, those exceptional natures to whom it is enough to pursue Truth for her own sake would, no doubt, be fully helped and encouraged but women would still want that stimulus to thought given by its connexion with the world of action which raises and widens second-rate men.(26)

If she could have had a choice, Snow would have preferred being a second rate man to being a first rate woman. But being a woman, and in particular, an exceptional, educated woman, she knew that for intellectual women fulfillment was only by a "connexion with the world of action" - i.e., the world of men. Her father and her Darwin uncles, though they were gentlemen of leisure, typified the world of thought, which, if and when they wished, could be connected to the world of action. They had a choice; Snow did not. There was also the emotional configuration of the family. Expectations of sons were quite different from expectations of daughters - and there was an abundance of Wedgwood-Darwin sons in Snow's generation, so there was no possibility of a daughter being a substitute for a son. Besides, Hensleigh had no faith in his daughter's abilities, nor did he share her interest in literature. Her Uncle Erasmus quite openly favoured Effie and Hope over the boys and over Snow. If Snow looked to her mother for a role model, she saw quite clearly what was expected of her - a good wife and

devoted mother, an accomplished hostess, a competent manager of a household that included visiting friends and relatives as well as servants, an active supporter of charitable causes, a loyal and helpful friend, whose closest friendships appeared to be with feminist or masculine-minded women, such as Harriet Martineau, and, lastly, a wise, well-informed intellectual guide to the men around her. If this all seemed like a safe, boring life of dedication to others, Fanny Wedgwood had found a compensation in her long lasting love affair with Erasmus Darwin. At the age of thirty-five, Snow had never experienced a completely satisfying relationship with any man, nor did she believe herself capable of intimacy with a man. The idea of physical contact between the sexes was attractive only in the abstract. She could neither imitate her mother in the activities that were supposed to be fulfilling, nor in the romantic love that actually was fulfilling. As a woman Snow was a disappointment to her family and to herself. In "Female Suffrage," she expressed these feelings quite clearly:

> The influence which the anticipations of others exercises over us is subtle and impalpable, but its importance is such that the difference of facility in following out a pursuit to which these anticipations are or are not adjusted, can only be represented to a person who has never experienced it by saying that the largest allowance of outward help is hardly a compensation.(27)

The outward help she sought was through a man - an older, gifted, superior man, usually safely married, whom she could serve and who would not only protect her but also be that vital "connexion with the world of action." Erskine, Scott, Maurice and Browning were all placed on this "father-figure pedestal" - only Browning failed to look upon her as a daughter.

Snow was a feminist, but she was also a misfit. She believed in women's suffrage, education and intellectual independence - but not in her own. She was inadequate because she was a woman and as a woman

she was further inadequate because she failed to measure up to the masculine idea of ideal femininity. She had passed through her "dark night of the soul," but unlike Florence Nightingale or Josephine Butler, she had not heard the voice of God giving her life a direction.

Chapter 8

Beloved Emily (1868-1870)

> I am going through such a dreary, unsatisfactory phase of life, feeling continually pushed aside, and I know all of my friends cannot have become suddenly overbearing and contemptuous, and that it must be I who am exacting, and I do so long to find the meaning of this.
>
> Julia Wedgwood to Emily Gurney
> March, 1870

The intimate friendship between Snow and Emilia (Emily) Gurney had begun at Linlathen in the summer of 1865, less than three months after Snow's dismissal of Browning and when, according to her sisters, she was in the midst of her nervous breakdown. Both women described the start of the friendship as a sudden mutual attraction occuring one afternoon in the drawing room when they were alone, seated side by side on the green sofa, speaking of their religious feelings. This experience was so powerful that they took each other's hands and knelt together in prayer. Over thirty years later, Snow wrote that while they had known each other "from our almost contemporaneous girlhood, but 'til I met her beneath that roof where all attraction was revealed and intensified, I felt none for her."(1)

The spirit of Linlathen was an intimate, personal communion transcending the ordinary bonds of friendship and shared experience which held together some, though not all, of the Linlathen circle in a mystical combination of spirituality and thinly-disguised sexuality. At the time of the fateful encounter, Emily, who was eight years older than Snow, was already over forty, married for thirteen years and far more worldly. - "Dear Snow - I think you have been given to me to help me against the comfortable deadening sleepy atmosphere of middle age - I assure you I have felt the fatness of forty creeping over my spirit."(2)

The only child of the Revd. Samuel Ellis Batten and Caroline Venn, the youngest daughter of Revd. John Venn, Rector of Clapham, Emily spent her childhood in the Evangelical surroundings of the Clapham Sect, which left a lasting impression on her. Her father died when she was a baby, and she and her mother returned to live at Clapham. There they became friendly with the Wedgwoods, the Thorntons and the Inglises. The two widows Caroline Batten and Mary Rich formed a friendship strengthened over the years by their devotion to Thomas Erskine.

Whenever separated, Emily and her mother wrote letters daily. When Emily married Russell Gurney on 1 September, 1852, her mother not only took up permanent residence in their home but accompanied them on their honeymoon through France, Germany and Switzerland. The tolerant husband was Recorder of London, M.P. for Southampton, privy councillor and a direct descendant of the wealthy Gurney merchant banking family. A religious man, philanthropist and advocate of liberal causes, such as the Married Women's Property Bill of 1870, Gurney was twenty-one years older than his wife. While Emily's mother and her uncles were gratified by the match, Emily herself was less enthusiastic, later confiding to Snow:

> ... This day 14 years ago I had a misgiving as I sat with Russell after we were engaged, that tho' I shd not be unhappy or rather tho' I shd have no cause for unhappiness - yet that there wd be no richness, no infinitude in my happiness - but I <u>have</u> found it an overflowing cup - Snow dearest Snow - & you who are so much worthier! but "Good measure, pressed down & running over" - Dearest Snow you give into my bosom in return for a poor word - How delightful the certainty of a response is! I rejoice in such an immovable conviction that I shall never look to you in vain... (3)

On the surface Emily was a satisfactory wife to Gurney, who had many charitable activities and social obligations in his political career. She was a dedicated benefactor to the sick and the poor and an accomplished hostess at their impressive London home, 8 Palace Gardens.

Though well-educated and interested in theology and in charitable causes, Emily had more of an emotional than an intellectual disposition; she was consistently attracted to men and women whose abilities were superior to hers. Married to an active, decisive man old enough to be her father, having no children of her own and keeping up a dependent relationship to her mother when she was well into middle age, Emily at forty was more like an adolescent girl than a mature woman. She developed school-girl crushes or loves for other women which she never seemed to discard or to outgrow. The most passionate of these crushes was for Snow. Whether Emily was conscious of a sexual nature to her feelings and desired their overt expression is difficult to judge after the lapse of more than a century.

The language used in religious circles coupled with the contradictions of inhibitedness and indiscretion in correspondence, which seems so strangely incongruous with Victorian attitudes of morality, defies interpretation (or misinterpretation) out of the context of the time and the particular circumstance. Because physical love was not a subject of discussion for Victorian ladies, words have different meanings. The Evangelical language, and most specifically some of the endearments and phrases used within the Linlathen circle, are decidedly erotic. THE BELOVED ONE (in capital letters) inevitably refers to Erskine, whereas "My (or your) beloved" was used most frequently to mean a husband or wife; and "our beloved" usually meant a mutual friend. Saint and Angel were used frequently as a direct address or as a description of anyone admired. Dearest or My Dearest were in no way exclusive, and the sentence "I love you" usually meant an inclusion in the love of God rather than any carnal wish. Still, it is difficult to believe that Emily was entirely innocent of carnal feelings when she wrote such sentences as - "Oh, how I long to feel you in my arms again, blessed little Snow" - or - "Dearest Snow, are you in that room where I put my arms round your little body when you

were in bed with a headache?" - or - "Oh, my blessed Snow - what a gift you are to me! How little did I think in middle age to have such a new friend - suddenly born to me with no end of unexpected imagined qualities but more wonderful than any of the kind of sympathy & affection that I always thought could only be by long slow degrees" - and - "I like you to want me - that is not being exacting & it gives me a reason for yielding to my own wish to put trumpery little things I do not care for aside that I may be with you in spirit - My Snow, my Snow, I love you for being what you are... "(4)

While Snow's feelings are equally ardent and sincere, there is something less overtly sexual in the expression. - "Though we are so near of an age," she writes, "I have a sort of feeling to you as a mother - the same sort of trust that nothing will be taken amiss."(5) And to this Emily replies: "Perhaps there is a kind of Motherliness in my affection for you, for I long to take you to my bosom, caress you and rock you in my arms."(6)

In her relations with both men and women Snow was certainly naive. As her sister Effie observed: "She is so preoccupied by great imponderables that she quite overlooks what is perfectly obvious to every one else."(7) And, of course, her deafness constantly brought about misunderstandings. Still, one can't help feeling that like Queen Victoria she probably did not believe that sexual acts could take place between women because women simply never felt that way and because there was nothing they <u>could do</u>.

The close association between religious experience and sexuality has often been noted, and the communal life at Linlathen with its emphasis on group prayer, kneeling together, holding hands, feeling God's love as a tender embrace, spiritual ecstasy, and giving oneself to Christ as a bride to a bridegroom, must surely have aroused sexual feelings rather than suppressed them, though, somewhat surprisingly, Erskine himself had a remarkably asexual effect on his followers. The

routine at Linlathen called for two periods of solitary study or meditation and for group prayers four times daily. Since Snow could not hear the bell which summoned the participants to prayer, Emily, her mother or one of Erskine's sisters usually came to her bedroom to fetch her. The house had sixteen bedrooms along two corridors. Within these halls there was something of a school dormitory atmosphere created by Erskine himself who often wandered into his guests's rooms, sat on their beds and asked them either to embrace him or to pray with him. His two sisters also were in the habit of blessing and hugging any and every one at the slightest provocation. To someone as repressed and physically self-conscious as Snow this touching and caressing under the respectable guise of God's all-embracing love must have been welcomed.

Since Snow was already something of a celebrity with her two published novels, it is easy to see why Emily was impressed by her and sought her friendship. Snow was a far more complex personality than Emily; she was more intelligent, more articulate, more independent and more self-controlled. Under ordinary circumstances one might have supposed that Snow would have recoiled from the sort of effusive woman who insensibly fondled and kissed, who chattered continually of feelings rather than of thoughts and who could not bear to be separated from her dearest Mama or from her precious little Kai, a yapping terrier to whom she spoke baby-talk. But the summer of 1865 had not been an ordinary summer for Snow. She was still suffering from the separation from Browning and from the feeling that he no longer cared for her. That anyone, man or woman, suddenly could admire her and love her was in itself a sufficient foundation for friendship. Emily provided a much-needed boost to her self-respect, and she was also someone to whom Snow could confide her anguish over the loss of Browning's friendship and who, unlike her sisters, had not been privy to earlier events. In fact, Snow did not identify Browning by name to Emily but simply referred to him as "my dearest friend." There was also the sharing of Erskine as the

father-figure. (Only in Snow's letters to Emily does she refer to Erskine as "the beloved Padre" or "our Padre") and only if there were a strong sisterly feeling could Snow have openly criticized the revered father. Yet to Emily, without fear of misunderstanding or of seeming disloyal, she acidly observed that "the Beloved so often seems to think that light is made to see and not see by."(8)

Over the next three years their friendship was strengthened because of their devotion to Erskine and to his teaching that life was an education rather than a probation and that all human beings would be saved and restored to the image of God through universal atonement and forgiveness through the death of Jesus Christ. They saw each other frequently in London and were able to share the responsibility of one or the other journeying to Scotland during the frequent occasions when Erskine appeared to be dying. The friendship was also strengthened because Emily's love and admiration for Snow did not lessen and was constantly repeated in words and actions. Snow certainly reciprocated the feelings to some degree. At the very least she was flattered and reassured of the affection which she believed was absent in so many relationships with others whom she loved.

In November of 1868, when Browning reopened their correspondence by sending to her at Linlathen the proofs of his Poem, Snow immediately wrote to Emily that she had received a letter from her "dearest friend." Emily replied:

> Dearest Snow, I am glad for one thing that <u>that</u> channel might be re-opened because at least it must be proved to you that you had misunderstood some of the feeling with which it was closed. Surely there was none of that condemnation which so hurt you as a woman - this must be healing to you - Yet on the other hand how I dread for you the stirring of feelings which were in a measure laid to rest - Of course I do not know enough to form an opinion even vaguely - I can only guess that such intercourse would be too wholly absorbing to be well for you - if it was never to <u>grow</u> complete.
>
> I don't think self-sacrifice given shd be wholly extravagant. What amount of pleasure &

> benefit for your friend is to be purchased by the consumption of the whole being?
>
> Dearest Snow, when you can write to me again, pray do. I have burnt yr letter - I am very anxious about you. I suppose that barrier you speak of in a woman is an instinct of self-preservation.
> Ever yr most loving EG(9)

Five months later, when The Ring and the Book was finished and ready for publication, there was no more reason for Snow's conversations by correspondence with Browning. Once again she feared that there would be silence and isolation and that Browning had finished not only with his poem but with her as well. She went to Cambridge for a fortnight visit to the Maurices, both of whom were in ill-health. From there she wrote letters to Erskine, to Aunt Rich, to Browning, to Emily and to her mother. They were all quite different in tone and in content.

Snow wrote to Erskine asking if she might come to Linlathen in August and once more serve as his amanuensis. Erskine answered that he would be delighted to receive her attentions. To her mother she wrote on 4 March 1869:

> Dearest Mother, I don't like to send you a 2nd envelope of mere enclosure. I am having a very pleasant visit here, neither of the poor folk is quite so bad as I expected, & he is one of the few Saints who do stand illness, also anxiety about him has a good effect on her, so altogether the atmosphere of illness is not the depressing influence one generally finds it. I go out a little, groan over the impossibility of sketching, & chiefly sit by her sofa writing my own letters & watching for her inclination to talk, which certainly is greater than is usual with those who suffer as she really does. In the evening I read them Miss Martineau's biographies which makes (sic) an admirable reading out book, one or two make an easy evening's work & just set one off in the subjects one cares to talk about.(10)

To her Aunt Rich she was more candid about the problems facing the Maurices. Maurice realized that he was no longer able to keep up with

the obligations of his professorship at Cambridge and his pastoral office in London; the strain of the weekly journeys taxed his strength. His wife thought that he would never have any peace and quiet in London, and Snow wrote to Aunt Rich on 13 March, 1869: "I could not say to her what I felt strongly, that I did not think his Professorial work wd be very gratifying to him in the long run, & the element of discouragement is so bad for the years of failing strength while his sermons seem more & more to arouse the kind of feeling he wd wish. He has a pretty good class - about 20 undergraduates, - but that is not really many, & I can't help fancying they will decrease."(11)

* * * * *

The following day she wrote a very different sort of letter to Browning in which she attempted to justify her dismissal of him four years earlier.

> Dear friend,
>
> It feels flat and dismal to have no more fuel for my critical fire, and I like to write and tell you so... I should have felt somewhat mortified to see how little you know, in the allusions which imply that ours has been a mutual relation - only that I think these are lies pure and simple - scentless oil, with no imprisoned odour. You are not really so arrogant, with all your arrogance, as to think that our shares were equal? My dear Friend, do not give me the utterly needless pain of having for a moment to think that you think it. Every act of mine during our short intercourse implied that this <u>could</u> not be - that I might merely consider myself. Whether I did wisely or unwisely for myself is not a matter I care to press on you or on any one. I think our common hunger for facts as they are is one thing that has drawn us together; do not let our intercourse be seen by any other light. Indeed, I am not unreasonable. I could bear to have the whole thing fade out of your mind, only not assume such a shape as you suggest (I do not say design) when you say it was a loss to <u>you</u>.(12)

At the same time she wrote to Emily:

> ... I have been writing to the Friend I have talked to you about so much. I think it is very likely the letter will end the correspondence, not that I have said anything unfriendly, but I fancy he has got to the end of what he wants to say to me now. I implored him to spare me

> the pain of thinking I had given him pain, and I shd not wonder if the touch of pathos frightened him away! Strange are the mysteries in our relations to each other! Yet I am glad I have made that appeal, I think we ought not to let each other be cruel... (13)

Of course Snow could not have been more wrong in her prediction of Browning's lack of response. He replied angrily and at great length, telling her exactly how he felt.

> Honestly, I do not understand what you mean, or, at least, <u>why</u> you mean what, on the whole, I suppose you may. If I wanted to play at picking out causes of offence, I mean, in the attributing real falseness to me - the last thing in your thoughts, I well know. There was certainly as great a loss to me as to you - if I treat you as I would be treated, and believe you - in the cessation of our intercourse. Now, why not? No playing and nonsense - in what respect was I left then with better resources than you? If you even meant such an enormous absurdity as that I saw more company, in one way or another way, than you - first, I doubt the fact - I should not wonder if you had a face to face acquaintance with just as many men and women that count as such, as I had or have: then resources of the other sort - you do not seriously talk to me in the strain of "Ah, my gossip, you are older and more learned (in Guidoism)(14) and a man! - All I know is, that in some ambiguous way I am motioned to step up on to some pretty sort of pedestal where I am to observe you somewhere below - which I decline doing.
>
> I lost something peculiar in you, which I shall not see replaced - is that stated soberly enough? I neither can - ever could, nor would, were I able - replace anything I have once had...
>
> As to "being impatient with what has occupied me for years" - no: it is <u>done</u>: I occupy myself elsewhere, or else look elsewhither. Goodbye: I wish I could see you again: last Wednesday, I sat at dinner close to an acquaintance of some thirty years - he was very kind, and kept talking so long that I said "Come, we must go into the drawing room." On Saturday he fell, dead. He was wanting me to meet somebody at his house, whom I abstain from meeting, and he urged that life was too short and uncertain to allow delay in the matter. I was obdurate notwithstanding. Goodbye again!
> R.B.(15)

These vehement words must have greatly upset Snow, for she suffered a spell of her "sharp, nervous headaches" for which brandy seemed the only relief. When she returned home to Cumberland Place, she discussed Browning's letter with Emily who helped her draft her reply. It is dated Good Friday, the symbolism of which she undoubtedly intended and which Browning would not have missed. In this letter, she seems at last to remove her mask and speak the truth.

> Dear friend, it was some refracted words of yours that made it possible to me to do as I did, (or what were represented as such.) I was the seeker, you know. I think every step in our intercourse was initiated by me. My friendship with you was - is - the great blessing of my life, but it was impossible to me to carry on that outward indulgence of it after it had been implied to me "He feels it as a gêne." But why do I go back to this? - not certainly that I need occupy your thoughts with it. Not for a moment would I cage the thoughts which I long to follow into the highest height and the lowest depth, in any minute personal speculations. If it were a question of blame to be divided between us (and I know it is not) no self-reproach could sting like any disappointment in you. But I cannot quite bear to hear you speak as if the intercourse which was preluded for me by years of the deepest sympathy, and which is remembered as the era of my life, had been a <u>mutual</u> gain - its interruption, a mutual loss. "In what respect were you left better off than I?" Subtract from that statement what is needed to make it true in your lips, and the result will afford a very sufficient answer... You will tell me about what you take in hand next, won't you? I think I need not say whether every word of yours is precious to me. I wish I knew your sister.
> Yours ever,
> F.J.W.(16)

In most lives, though often unrecognized, there is an hour of vital decision; or perhaps only a moment, a moment when the future swings in the balance and is irrevocably decided for good or ill. If only Snow had written that final sentence - "I wish I knew your sister" - five months earlier, when Browning had first suggested their meeting again through his sister, how very different the course of both of their lives might have been. The vital moment had passed, and

she missed it. Browning was a proud and sensitive man. From his point of view, she had severely criticized his work, personally rejected him as a man, not once but twice, and was now teasing and flirting with him again. He would not risk being hurt another time. Whatever tenderness and affection he had felt for her in the past has been replaced by resignation to the hopeless reality of the difference in their expectations. His words are factual and studied; the indiscretion and spontaneity of feeling are gone. He is sincere but on his guard.

> I do not understand, from your letter, the whole importance of the statement in it that "it was some refracted words of mine, or what were represented to you as such, that made it possible", etc. And again, that other things were "impossible after it had been implied to you that 'they were felt as a gêne'. You add, "Why do I go back to this?" Ask rather - or I ask - what is this going forward to a quite new piece of information? I was certainly told that all happened through quite another kind of misapprehension - a thing which, with my experience of people's power and will to apprehend rightly, I could easily imagine.
>
> If you mean to say that, consequent to this, and as a facilitation to your acting upon it, came the report of these refracted words - well, I don't know whether, after all, there is any good of there having been reported this pure and simple untruth, any advantage, practically, to either of us: I considered, as I said then, and repeated in the words you quote, that in deferring to what I was bound to think the opinion of your family, no matter how mistaken in such a matter, you "let be or let do wisely." I should have said something else could the fancy have crossed my mind that the "refracted words" entered into the question. I shall not put myself into the attitude of having ever uttered anything that could be so refracted by any stupidity conceivable, for the mere sake of pelting such a scarecrow simulation of what I am.
>
> The opposite charge would have been not so absurd - that, out of the two or three occasions when I was induced to speak of you to your own friends, the mere honest expression of my sense of the value of your acquaintance might have been distorted by a foolish person, intending no malignity. I should not have seen the policy - had I stooped to try - in pretending to ignore a very patent thing, as if it were proper to undervalue a jewel lest one be supposed to meditate stealing it: I never went out of the way to praise it, but if somebody, some two or three times in all these years, came in my way with a

question - I answered it. Now, don't suppose this new discovery gives me any particularly undue pain: it is a little corroborative incident, quite consentaneous to my theory of the world and its ways.

It would be useless to argue out the advantages of two such different lives as yours and mine. I never implied, I hope, that I have not, nor always had, nearly all the conditions which make life happy.

It is also useless to disertate (sic) upon uselessness. I enjoyed seeing you very much - there is a fact - and acquiesced in giving up that enjoyment for any cause that seemed sufficient to you - there is another: if you, of your very own self could, however, fantastically, assure me, "Oh, but it was all done to relieve <u>you</u> from a gêne!" - well, I shall say - "You know better!" I shall always give you as much as you care to take, of my labours or idlenesses of the literary kind. "There is a form in these things," as Lady Wilhemena (17) says, a decent modesty which I am not unwilling to be troubled with - but, I dare think you do feel as kindly to me as you say: ask yourself whether you can disbelieve me when I repeat that my trust in that is one of my most precious possessions, and whether the old occasions when, every week at least, I could <u>inhale</u> - rather than be methodically apprized of the reality of such a possession, were a "gêne" to
yours affectionately now then and ever,
R.B.(18)

I go, in ten days or a fortnight, to Paris for a month - letters are not sent to me when I travel.

Again there seems a possible glimmer of hope in the postscript, for he has no obligation to tell her his plans unless he wants or expects her to reply.

Snow, too, must have sensed the expectation or desire for a reply; typical of her self-defeating behaviour, she delays twelve days after receiving his letter before writing to him. She had gone with her parents to Ravensbourne, the home of the Bonham Carters in Kent. From there she wrote to Emily, enclosing a draft of the letter she proposed to send to Browning. She must have made several drafts, for one remains in the Wedgwood archives. Unfortunately the complete draft is missing, but the first folio, dated April 4, 1869, Ravensbourne, Bromley, Kent, is quoted in its entirety:

> Yes, dear Friend, your reproof is no less just than unintentional - why should I "go forward to a piece of information" which must cause you annoyance, & cannot greatly change the aspect of my conduct in the past? It is excuse, but not justification that I so profoundly desired that you should know how multiform & complex were the influences which impelled me to the surrender of the most prized possession of my life. But this is weak and superfluous. You know <u>me</u>, why should I care that you should accurately estimate an action which was only to a small extent mine? Forgive me. - Perhaps I am too like Lady Wilhemina.
> There was no malice of thoughtlessness in the "refraction" I spoke of. It was one of those subtle impressions which are potent in proportion to their vagueness, urged upon me by one whose judgement I revered, I could not but yield - now I accept the consequences. I am anxious you should not import into this transaction any image of bitterness or ingnominy which could be due only to my unwise revival. Nothing was intimated to me but that that kind of apprehension which is not unnaturally created by such a friendship as ours, where one party has a centre for all the life of the heart & the other has not - was shared by you. As there would be nothing insulting or unkind in such a suspicion from you, so neither was there anything of that nature in the feelings of those who gave my information this impression/(who I know not) who infused this impression into your words. "With your experience of people's power" (do not add <u>will</u>) "to apprehend rightly" you must have witnessed many such illusions in your long experience of mankind. For the rest, your hypothesis of the double cause is substantially correct/ It was the/wish of others/made easy to my by what/I thought was yours.(19)

The only significant difference between the First Folio of this draft and the letter which Browning actually received are the final two sentences which are deleted from the version sent. What Snow wrote to Emily is also missing, but apparently it was apologetic and self-abasing. Emily's reply, headed "our notes crossed today," and dated April 5th, Monday Evg, is as follows:

> My Snow, I wish you cd see into my heart the impression made by your words "any touch of contempt" of startling bewildering inappropriateness. If "something is wanting" in you - it must be wanting in me too, for I fail to see what I cd have suggested to you the possibility of any remote resemblance to such a sensation, as the effect of - that letter itself - or of sending it to me or indeed of anything

whatever that I have discovered in connection
with one part of the transaction with which
I am acquainted.
To let me have any part in what has so moved
your inmost being does indeed make me feel a
kind of pride in yr love - but it does not
lower you, tho' I feel it lifts me up - Yes,
& I have too a kind of "Motherly" sensation
in my upward looking love to you - a longing
to take you in my arms & rock you and
shelter you!
But about the letter, it seems to me very
calm & sweet - one sentence only seems to
suggest a "further demand" upon him perhaps -
the last - where the double cause, the wish
of others & his own excluded the idea of any
participation of yr own judgement even - your
will had nothing to do with your action why
shd you abide by it, if he sufficiently urges
upon you to retract it, he might feel -
I think your sentence about bitterness &
ignominy being imported into the transaction
thro' yr unwise revival too humbly apologetic
- the first page & a half seems to me to
express that enough in its loving minor tone.
Oh my Snow - may you one day be shewn that
you have been of some blessed use to yr
beloved
so prays yr E
Do you not feel that there is not the objection
to occasional intercourse by letter that there
wd be meeting- - Without making a demand cd that
be not expressed - I suppose not - this letter
seems so only to refer to a door that has been
shut & I was only thinking about the possibility
of suggesting that that might be reopened - but
I wd never wish any more than you, that you shd
suggest that all must cease.(20)

Several days later Snow returned to London, met with Emily on Sunday April 11 and probably read to her the final letter she had sent to Browning on Wednesday, April 7. From the last two paragraphs of the letter, it would have been very dim of Emily not to have guessed that the man Snow loved was Browning:

What I feel about you does not occupy a large
part of the surface of my mind - no feeling can
which is in any way linked with action. But
nothing else casts its roots so deep, or comes
so near the region where I am alone with God -
and it is a satisfaction to me that you know
this, for I think it lays a certain
responsibility on every soul to have reflected
that light for another, and so to be capable of

> obscuring it. One sentence of your letter I hardly understand, "I never implied, I hope, that I have not, nor always had nearly all the conditions which make life happy." I should have just inverted what you seem to say - that you had all and have them not. Yet I am very thankful for the assurance that to have had is enough for you. I should like to squeeze out some impatience and contemptuousness from your letter and from yourself - just as I might have wished to squeeze out Guido and the lawyers - but I suppose we must take you as you are. You see how the British Public differs from me as to the value of what you have given us! If anything could convert you to my estimate I should think it would be this. But even this corroboration you will probably withstand. Please remember what you have written, "I shall always give you as much as you care to take of my labours," etc. - I wish you would let me copy for you, you see how beautifully I can write. Perhaps you would be afraid of any interpolating moral sentiments? - and it might be a danger. I hope your sojourn in Paris will be fragrant with blessed memories.
> Farewell. Your F.J.W.(21)

After all their endless discussions of who was superior and who was inferior, she could hardly have expected him to accept her offer of copying for him. An intellectual servant was precisely what Browning did not want her to be and what she neurotically persisted in wanting to be to every man she admired. Even more perversely, and as if to insure his rejection of her, she makes reference to the "blessed memories" of Paris where Browning had gone after his elopement with Elizabeth. There was in her a morbid need, as if hurling a boomerang, to inflict pain upon herself while pretending it came from another direction.

When Snow left the Gurney house in Palace Gardens that Sunday evening after reading to Emily the final draft of the letter to Browning, Emily did indeed know that the unnamed man whom Snow so adored was Browning. She immediately wrote to Snow the following letter headed simply "Sunday night":

> After much balancing in my mind for & against writing to tell you the state of my mind, I

> have determined to do so, as some future conversation may be affected by it - Beloved Snow it may irk you - but I cd not help it as I heard that letter it seemed like a half-waking remembrance of a voice I <u>almost</u> knew - but strange to say it was not till an hour after you had gone that like a flash its identity seemed revealed to me - You see you cannot either confirm or contradict my conviction & therefore I can never be absolutely positive I am right - & so far the veil remains drawn down - but a thousand fold more than before my heart aches with yours.
>
> Need I tell you that every thought connected with this will be more if possible than ever buried sacredly in my heart
> Yr loving E.(22)

From Emily's note or after-thought it is difficult to be certain whether she is referring only to a realization that the man was Browning or whether she also suddenly realized the identity of the person who had spread the malicious rumour of Browning's referring to Snow as his gêne. It is reasonable, from the literary allusions in the letter, that Emily would have immediately guessed the man to be Browning. Certainly her conviction of the identity of Snow's "dearest friend" would have been something Snow easily could have confirmed or contradicted, whereas the identity of the person who began and circulated the gossip was unknown to Snow and therefore she could not positively say was or was not true. As Emily does indeed write later with confidence about Snow's beloved, it is more probable that she <u>thought</u> she knew who the gossiper was and wisely kept "the veil drawn down" since she could "never be absolutely positive I am right". But if, as she says, "a thousand fold more than before my heart aches with yours," the scandalmonger must have been someone unsuspected - a friend turned enemy.

This view corroborates Browning's earlier sentiments that someone was purposely and maliciously out to do him harm by circulating untrue rumours and attributing false statements to him.

The two lines cut out of Snow's last letter which state that her

dismissal was from a "double cause" - being also the wish of others, is significant, as is the statement that since the "refracted words" were urged upon her "by one whose judgement I revered, I could not but yield." These sentences narrow down the possibilities of who her informant was - for, her ceasing the friendship with Browning being the wish of others and the judgement of one she revered could only mean some older person in her family, i.e., her father, for it would seem that Fanny and Browning liked each other. Hensleigh and Browning probably did not. Neither mentions the other in any extant correspondence, and, while they knew the same people socially and belonged to the same club, the Athenaeum, they were very different in personality, Browning being as boisterous and impulsive as Hensleigh was reserved and controlled. While it is unlikely that Hensleigh would have refused to accept Browning as a son-in-law, it is unlikely that he would have been pleased at the prospect.

Whoever repeated the gossip to Hensleigh - or, possibly, to Mary Rich - could hardly have been doing a kindness any more than those who began the gossip. Browning may have been right in his feeling that someone was purposely and maliciously out to do <u>him</u> harm by circulating untrue rumours and attributing false statements to him. In Paris, in 1865, his sister had received condolences from friends because Browning's son Pen was about to have a step-mother. Repetition of the gossip back and forth across the channel might account for the unusual use of the word gene in the gossip about them.

John Forster[23] who for many years was one of Browning's best friends, gossiped about Browning and various women, angering Browning to such an extent that at a dinner party at the Ernst Schlessinger Benzons,[24] Browning threatened to pitch a decanter of claret at Forster's head. His host intervened, but Browning never again spoke to Forster, who, nonetheless, continued to gossip about him for the next twenty years.

When Browning failed to answer Snow's letter (which may have arrived after he had left or when he had not enough time to answer) depression settled upon Snow the very next day, though by herself delaying ten days in replying she had consciously or unconsciously made circumstances difficult for him. Over and over again she brought about her own suffering. Yet she simply could not accept the ending as permanent and kept ruminating over the past and blaming herself. If only she had been less proud, if only she had been willing to preserve their intercourse on any terms, if only, if only...

She went to Linlathen in August. Her emotional tie to Erskine seemed stronger than ever, and unlike Browning, Erskine was quite happy to have her as his amanuensis. She spent two hours with him in the mornings, writing letters for him and taking down his thoughts as he dictated them, though little progress was made in putting a book together. In the evenings, when there were no other visitors, she or Jane Gourlay or Jem Paterson read aloud from the Bible.

That Emily was clearly concerned over Snow, while she was in Scotland, is reflected in a letter the first folio of which is missing:

> Linlathen in the beginning of our intercourse - & even later. I mean you spoke with what appears to me a self-reproach that is unaccountable to me - unless I am wanting in some faculty for discerning yr crime. The pain, the humiliation, even mortification I can see ground for, but none of yr self-accusations - but I don't like to adjudge you morbid to that degree so I think it must be partly the fault of my vision which is not sufficiently delicate & partly my ignorance of all the circumstances.
>
> After what you told me in our last interview I cd not but think there was no question whatever about yr duty in putting a stop to <u>that</u> intercourse <u>as it was</u> - However where <u>such</u> natures are concerned as yrs & that other there must be such infinite complexities as quite to baffle my little judgement.
>
> I thank God, I feel a great confidence that He is fashioning you well - & that the wondrous pattern will be better than we cd

have fancied. I say this only after brooding & longing and yearning for ½ an hour that the circumstances that are to give your soul its bent had been quite different! Beloved, Adieu(25)

One can sympathize with Emily, for the infinite complexities of two such natures as Browning's and Snow's still quite baffle "little judgments" over a century later.

* * * * *

On 23 September, 1869, Snow wrote:

Dearest At. R. I hardly know how to break it to you that I am going to leave our Beloved next week! I promised my people this year that I wd not be away from them the whole summer as I was last, & I find that this will be the case, taking in my other engagements unless I leave next Wednesday. It is so great a pain to me to leave him that I could not do it if there were not many reasons for my being elsewhere. I feel so accutely(sic) & none the less accutely(sic) that I have felt it every time, that I may never see him again, & I feel too that I am in some ways a help to him - though perhaps not so much as I make it appear in writing so much of my doings with him. You will easily believe that they must be large reasons which outweigh such a strong pull here. The first is that I have mentioned, the sense of a real permanent loss in being so much away from my own people. When I returned last December though I could not regret my 4 months at Linlathen I still felt that as regarded my home it had been a misfortune. I had grown so embedded in interests in which they took no share that instead of the joy I expected in being with my best beloved ones there was a sense of strangeness & unnaturalness that made me feel this had better not happen again. Emily Gurney felt so strongly this side of the question that she wrote to me at Linlathen saying she thought there was a danger in my staying so long. And I determined this time in coming that I would not repeat that long absence from my home. If I had no parents living, I would, as I have often told him, gladly stay with him for the rest of his life, but in their life time, I want not to have long gaps with them. My mother I think feels much as you do about it, but my father is different, & though he does not want me in the least, yet I think he does not realise that I can be wanted anywhere else & so he looks upon my staying from home so long as an odd fancy of mine, which I don't like he shd think. There are other reasons but these seem to me sufficient

> by themselves, & so I have very sadly told him I am going... (26)

No words could better explain the insecurity and feeling of inferiority crippling her emotionally than the sentence that her father "does not want me in the least (and)... does not realise that I can be wanted anywhere else." She expresses it so matter-of-factly and without self-pity that it is impossible to believe she had the slightest insight that her relation to her father had complicated her relations with all men. She knows that he thinks her odd, but she is still the dutiful daughter trying to please a father she can never please - a feeling she later expressed in The Moral Ideal when she wrote: "Better one's own duty performed ill than the duty of another performed well." Regarding duty, her cousin Henrietta Darwin, who was herself intellectual and close friends with both Snow and Effie, wrote to Snow that she was far too self-sacrificing and dedicated to others and that they would all be happier if she would be more selfish and think first of her own happiness.

From Linlathen, Snow replied on 10 September 1869:

> Yes. I daresay you are right & I certainly have more than average hankering after doing for somebody. I do not think it has to do with selfishness or unselfishness; it seems to me there is about as much bad as good in the feeling, or perhaps rather more. I will not say benevolence has nothing to do with it, but I am sure vanity has quite as much. I have a sort of desolate feeling all the while I am waiting on him how soon it will all be over & I shall never find anybody to want me again - which seems to me rather a selfish than unselfish feeling. And I daresay I imagined this too general a tendency. Hope is even stronger on your side than you are as she thinks this need wholly evil & that women's lives are spoiled by unselfishness being made their object - that mine and thine ought to have nothing to do with it, & every object ought to be viewed in proportion to its influence on the general well-being, with all its advantages & disadvantages on the whole.(27)

There were so many "worthy causes" and philanthropic societies

which the daughters of the rich were expected to support with time, energy and money that Hope jokingly proposed that she and her sisters and Henrietta form a society for the Suppression of Charity.

* * * * *

Snow returned to London towards the end of September and then dutifully accompanied her parents and her sisters to Wales where they rented a house near her uncle Harry and his family. On 26 October, 1869, she wrote to Aunt Rich:

> I hope you received my Friday's letter, in answer to yours. I have not heard again from anybody in Scotland. I have written to our Beloved to try and get another letter from him. I am still absorbed in endless old Wesley - however I do think I have improved him very much, & that it bears condensing. I am rather tired of dwelling so long among such very narrow people as all those early Evangelicals were, but on the whole it has been much more satisfactory work than I expected, & I am now rather pleased with it, but I daresay I shall have more worry about it. I have not read anything else but the newspapers.(28)

Ten days later on 7 November, after her father and Uncle Harry had gone to Down and her mother had left to visit Aunt Fanny Allen, Snow again wrote to Aunt Rich describing the life she and her sisters were leading in the country.

> This is so exactly the place for me, all the beauty close at hand whenever we step out upon the terrace without taking a walk - which is what I so dislike; & it is so delightful us 3 being quite undisturbed together that unless anything turns up that I want to do I shall let myself stay on here to the end of the month. Effy was saying today she thought it did one good for a little while to have everything just as one liked & if that is the case we all ought to emerge in a state of perfect moral health for nothing can be so luxurious as our life here without a thought of anything but enjoyment from morning till night. I should not like long to lead a life so free from duties, but for a time I can't help liking it very much. I do feel that it is a great blessing, & perhaps not a very common

> one, that the two people whose society is the most welcome to me always are my sisters - & it is so rare that we have nothing to think of but each other, as we have here. Hope's delight in the country has the most extraordinary effect upon her, she is singing & laughing all day long, you wd not know her... I wonder whether you are hearing Mr. Maurice's last sermon today? I shd so like to have been present though I shd not have heard. I do not like to think of that coming to an end - how do all things hurry away from one's grasp! Yes indeed, I feel what you say of self-sacrifice, we are apt to think of that as the need of an exceptional spirit, whereas I think there can be no degree of blessedness in life without it, it is the exception when it makes an obvious & tangible part of the external life but I shd imagine there was no life where the secret springs of will cd be pure without it.(29)

Contradictions in feelings are apparent again. While it is her duty to be with her parents, Snow is far happier when they are away and she can be alone with her sisters and everything just as they like, which is to say, without responsibility. And yet, she would not like to be without duties for too long a time, and with the subject of duty she then discusses self-sacrifice without seeming to make the connection that her own duty, as she sees it, to her parents is in effect self-sacrifice.

Aunt Rich did attend Maurice's last sermon at the Vere Street church. The difficulty of his combining preaching and teaching was resolved when he became incumbent at St. Edward's in Cambridge. Close friends and members of the congregation in London wanted his sermons published as a testimonial to the nine years he had spent at St. Peter's, Vere Street church. Mary Rich was particularly active in this campaign and wrote to Fanny and to Snow about it. On 17 November, 1869, Snow wrote to her Aunt Rich.

> Dearest Aunt R. Here am I this lovely day sitting over an immense fire, my eyes a fountain of tears, my throat a newly Macadamized road, & my head an empty

> kettle left forgotten on the hob. So I think there is every chance of your having a charming letter! However I know you are not fastidious about letters, specially mine. Everything is looking so beautiful today, the trees such rich orange & amber against the blue sky, & the hills such a deep grey blue between them - the colouring almost too bright. But how strong an influence is bodily sensation! how completely all enjoyment of nature is shut out by even slight discomfort. I don't feel it quite the same with other kinds of enjoyment, - but perhaps with others the exact converse wd be true... E & H have been doing some pretty Phos(30) which you will like to see - no, pretty is not the word for a Pho. I think the best are not that - but interesting. I have not a word to send you from Edinburgh... Tell me what you thought of that Pall Mall article on Maurice. I liked almost all of it. If one cd wipe out of his writings all that is controversial & all that he has written in the last 6 or 7 years (which I think comparatively feeble) there wd remain some pure ore of true thought, - but by controversial I shd include not only all that was written against anybody but all that was written at anybody - or any set of persons, so that the residue wd be small... (31)

* * * * *

The news from Edinburgh grew gloomier as the daylight in the cold winter months became shorter. On 18 March, 1870, James Paterson wrote to Snow: "My dear uncle is still here, and though not suffering, it is a long weary death, but most peaceful and trustful. I wish you were here to see it, and get a loving look and word. If many loved him in his life, more would love him in death. All his words, conscious or unconscious, are expressions of love to God and man, without a cloud."(32)

During the last week of his life Thomas Erskine lapsed into a morbid depression from which the dark cloud seldom lifted. More and more he was obsessed with a deepening sense of the evil of sin, which for him was sexual immorality. Small incidents, things said or done years earlier, returned and lay painfully on his conscience. Over and over again he would say to himself as much as to those around him: "I know that God has forgiven me; but I cannot forgive myself."(33)

A few days before his death Snow wrote to Jane Gourlay: "What a wide circle is losing its centre! But the circle is made now & cannot be broken. It is a mysterious power, thus to bind so many."(34)

Thomas Erskine died on 21 March, 1870, and was buried beside his mother and brother in Monofieth Churchyard, which is situated on the estuary of the river Tay where it broadens out to meet the ocean. Upon hearing the news Snow again wrote to Jane Gourlay:

> ... And so it has come at last! the event we have so long watched for - even at least hoped for - that it seemed as if all feeling about it was anticipated - and yet now how impossible to realise! How long it takes to appreciate all that is gone. I feel as if my life were suddenly left empty - this is exaggeration. But oh how large a part of all the activity of my heart and mind is left now without an object! - How empty seems the future, what a black word "the summer" is to me now!(35)

Though Thomas Erskine was no longer of the material world, his spirit - the spirit of Linlathen - continued to influence the lives of many of his devoted followers for decades to come.

Chapter 9

One Perpetual Farewell (1870-1876)

"I want more out of life than I can get
out of any books or words."

Julia Wedgwood to Jane Gourlay
12 September 1874

Erskine left £100 to Snow in his will. His nephew Jem asked her to finish the book "Spiritual Order" which his uncle had been attempting to write for so many years. Predictably Snow offered the £100 to the Maurices so that they might have a holiday abroad in some warmer climate. "My beloved Mr Erskine left me £100 as a token of affectionate remembrance," Snow wrote to Maurice. "Will you not let me associate you with him in this remembrance? will not you give me the filial place he gave me, by helping me to make use of this money in a way that will give me lasting comfort?"(1) Maurice graciously refused, just as Snow graciously refused Jem's request to sort through Erskine's letters and papers alone, which, after all, she had been attempting during the last five years of his life. She did, however, offer to be of what assistance she could to anyone who undertook the task. Jane Gourlay volunteered and came to London with stacks of letters and notes and sermons; she remained with Snow at 1 Cumberland Place for three weeks before reaching the decision that it was not a task which she was competent to undertake. Next, Prof. John Shairp(2) took up the assignment but was unable to satisfy Jem or any of those who had been part of the Linlathen Circle. Thus, it was not until seven years later that William Hanna(3) edited The Letters of Thomas Erskine, which was published by David Douglas of Edinburgh. Snow wrote to Jane Gourlay that upon seeing the book she "went through strange vicissitudes of feeling about it. I confess that my first impression was utter dismay. And still, if I put on critical spectacles I do not know that

my feeling is very different. Those terrible monstrous Evangelical early letters that seemed as if they might have come out of any Evangelical biography of 40 years back & seemed to have no flavour or fragrance & where even I cd not hear his voice."(4)

At the time of Erskine's death, Snow was in Cambridge taking part in a series of lectures for women sponsored by Annie Clough at Merton Hall, which later became Newnham College. Snow was lecturing on poetry. "I read Browning's 'Easter Day' to the girls yesterday," she wrote to Emily Gurney. "I wonder if that gives you the same feeling it does me. I feel as if the veil of this world's show was slipping aside when I read it."(5) Exciting things were happening in women's education and Snow, who had had the benefit of lectures at the beginning of Bedford College in London twenty years earlier, wanted to be a part of the movement in Cambridge. Actually two colleges were being established there, and there was naturally some disagreement and rivalry.

Emily Davies, who founded Girton College felt strongly that women should take the same examinations as men; Prof. Henry Sidgwick(6) who supported higher education for women disagreed. Annie Clough, who, with Josephine Butler, had founded the North of England Council for promoting the higher education of women, also disagreed. Miss Davies eventually got her way, and the first college for women at Cambridge opened first at Hitchin, Hertfordshire, in 1869, but in the same year it was incorporated as Girton College and moved to Girton, outside Cambridge.

Snow's friend and mentor F.D. Maurice was instrumental in having the college moved from Hitchin but was dissatisfied with Girton. He felt strongly that the college should be <u>in</u> rather than <u>near</u> Cambridge because from the point of view of Cambridge professors encountering female students "any awkwardness will be increased by the slight barrier of a merely apparent concession to etiquette - that meetings in country lanes will be a more embarrassing situation than in Cambridge."(7) Meanwhile Annie Clough began her series of lectures for women and

eventually took a house in Cambridge for women students.

Snow was in demand as a lecturer at both Cambridge colleges and at Bedford and Grosvenor Colleges because of the recent success of her book John Wesley and the Evangelical Revolution of the Eighteenth Century which had had such a difficult beginning. Harriet Martineau wrote to her:

> I wish you would write biography for the rest of your days (as I have been saying to my Sister Rachel.) Large and noble subjects, I mean, of course. - Sagacity, dispassionateness, power of justice, power of analysis, power of appreciation, and remarkable power of expression in a capital style, - these are your characteristics, it seems to me, and these are what I take to be the chief requisites of a biographer. And these are not all you have.(8)

Richard Holt Hutton, who was editor of the Spectator, was now commissioning Snow to write a number of essays. A friend of Gladstone, James Martineau and Cardinal Newman, he and Snow were in perfect agreement philosophically. Both had accepted agnosticism and rationalism and championed a Christianity that could embrace the new sciences. Possibly the greatest conflict of the Victorian era was the attempt to reconcile religious belief with scientific truth, and Snow resolved it better than most. It was this conflict which prompted her in 1870 to begin the book The Moral Ideal, which was to take seventeen years to complete, and was the most important work of her life.

She continued to pour out her grief and her mental flagellations over her failed relationship with Browning to Emily, who remained sympathetic and concerned, even though, in a sense, their roles were now reversed. Shortly before Erskine's death Emily's mother had died, and Emily was absorbed in her own grief. Having longed for some death-bed sign of the after-life, for her mother's blessing and for forgiveness "of all the little negligences and ignorances," Emily was devastated when her mother, like Mrs. Gaskell, simply fainted , never

regained consciousness and died without leaving her daughter any reassurance.

Whereas Emily had been concerned over Snow's morbid depressions, Snow was now troubled over Emily's mental state. Emily began having visions of her dead mother and was hearing voices, not only of her mother but of other Saints who had passed over as well.

The first mention of a supernatural experience is in a letter dated 4 March 1870, when Snow was in Cambridge:

> ... dearest Snow - my whole soul is absorbed with something else & I must tell it you - as my blessed secret. I have a firm conviction that I have had a true vision of my Mother & that she also was conscious of my presence. Perhaps it wd be necessary for you to know what has been going on in my mind before you cd see how I was met - Two things have I been thirsting for - a glimpse of what she is tasting now & an eager desire to make her know that now I reverance her - & that I love her as never before - & now I am strangely satisfied & at rest on these points. It was a dream the night before last - but in my memory so unlike any dream that I ever had - in the clearness of the impression it left - & in the adequate sensation that I experienced.(9)

Snow sympathized with Emily, but then, and for many years to come, was sceptical about Spiritualism or supernatural experiences:

> Let us keep it in its place, let us not forget that what eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, eye cannot see nor ear hear. If the world of the sense is enlarged to include, do not let us forget it is the world of the senses still. It is a great thing that this world should open towards the supernatural, but it is not an opening towards God... (10)

To this letter she appended at the bottom of the page a later editorial comment. "I shd say rather more than this now 1898. I have derived vast consolation & hope from this source. But I still feel its incompleteness."(11)

In spite of the time and energy spent in teaching, writing, travelling and visiting friends and relatives, Snow was still thinking

of Browning. When she went to Barlaston, she wrote to Henrietta Darwin: "Cecily was very friendly & offered me brandy & water before I had been in the house two minutes... I had a very nice little visit at Barlaston, at least as nice as a visit can be where one misses all the interests which one depends upon oneself - this does not include Godfrey either who shares most of mine, but the daughters of the house are uneducated beyond what one can associate with without a sense of miss."(12)

Perhaps, after the death of Erskine, Snow felt a kind of release, enabling her to action, as in classical psychoanalytical theory; a spinster daughter after the death of her beloved father may no longer feel inhibitions about loving another man and may either marry immediately, embark upon a series of adulterous affairs or establish a deep relationship with another father-figure to whom she can lose her virginity without the guilt of incest.

On 11 June 1870 Snow again wrote to Browning, using as her excuse Emily's praise of The Ring and the Book - in contrast to her own unfavourable response. Browning replied immediately and politely, but in an entirely different tone from that which he had assumed in the past. From its final paragraph there can be no doubt that, for him, the relationship is truly and definitely over: "Come, let us go back to the quiet place, where we do not forget each other. Goodbye, dear friend; it was very pleasant to hear your voice in the dark - though I see no face for years now. R.B."(13)

But she does mistake it, or else she is unable to let go of him and returns neurotically to the theme of his perfect union with Elizabeth, which by now was the one subject he did not want to discuss with her or with anyone. His present life was dominated and haunted by his past, which had become a legend of such mythic proportions that seemingly he had no present earthly existence at all. It was worse than tactless of Snow, whom he had once hoped would love him for himself

alone, to revert to this theme:

> I will not guard against such stupid misunderstandings as that I should seem to say, where is your Beatrice. But this one Sabbath should make all the week holy, and you who have been satisfied should pass on that impression, when you have extracted all that was individual for your own holy of holies.
>
> Now dear Friend, if this oracle seems to you to be uttering wonderful folly please keep that conviction to yourself, and do not spend 1d. in trying to convince a fellow creature of being a fool - it would give me pain, which I know you would not willingly do. Yours ever affectionately. F.J.W.(14)

Browning, as far as is known, never wrote to her again. She was indeed foolish in matters of the heart or, in her own words, "imploring pain, unbearable pain." Like the early Christian martyrs she saw pain as a means of purification and the way to salvation for those unworthy of the perfect union of male and female leading to the highest good. As she persisted in reminding him, Browning had already had fulfillment with Elizabeth. Her own relationship with Browning was, as she had predicted, "one perpetual farewell."

Certainly she did suffer and certainly she did misunderstand, for on 29 July 1870, only two weeks after her final letter to Browning, she wrote to Emily: "Yet, oh this silence. 'You fit into all the angles of my nature', he said once. How have I lost that fitting? Emily never let us lose that by any friction with the world."(15) And, nearly thirty years later, she wrote in the margin opposite that quotation "not for Mr Erskine."

How profound was Erskine's influence on her, as opposed to her inherited disposition? Or as opposed to the influences on her of other strong personalities such as her father and her Aunt Rich? It is interesting and surprising that in an essay Snow wrote for the Contemporary Review in May of 1870 only two months after Erskine's death, she did not eulogize him or place him on a pedestal, but instead viewed him with a cold, critical eye:

> Except where his sense of humour was touched, he too exclusively regarded his fellow men as pilgrims toward eternity. The most solemn aspect of human life was too invariably before his eyes. Sin, and the deliverance from sin, ... were too constantly the objects on which his gaze was intently directed. (16)

That Snow was disillusioned by Erskine at the end of his life, though she continued to revere his memory, seems clear from the final paragraph of the essay:

> He was never at home in this world, there was something in him that demanded a different atmosphere from ours. His realities all lay in the region we are tempted to consider unreal; the visible and tangible universe seemed to have no soil in which he could take root. There is a rest in thinking of him as having escaped from it, not only in that sense in which we trust it is to all the summons to a higher stage of development, but in that more special sense in which we may give thanks that one who long eschewed an ungenial climate is recalled to a region after which he has long panted and where he feels himself at home.(17)

Long after Erskine's death and after the final letter from Browning, both of which occurred within a three month period, Snow mourned the loss of both men. In her edited letters to Emily are references to Browning without calling him by name: "I said once to the one who came nearest to me 'I have a fine ear for any strain in communion' and he quoted it to me afterwards - and then came a time when a dull ear might have distinguished it in his tone to me! I can look back upon it now quite calmly, and still say I thank God for this his greatest gift."(18)

* * * * *

It was inevitable that at some point Snow and George Eliot would meet. They knew the same people, both in the literary world and in the feminist movement. They were both interested in theology and in moral issues. Possibly they met through Richard Holt Hutton or through Erasmus Darwin. Certainly by late 1869 or early 1870 Snow was calling upon her, for she wrote to Emily:

> I feel so much what G.E. said "how poor one feels on those days when the whole experience has been of expansion of the self, and one has received nothing" - she was saying that she felt it such a difficulty to silence herself and receive and how she envied Mr L. for doing so, - but I think I told you. I want some influence from without to come to me... I feel as if I could never concentrate my mind on a subject just because I can never wholly avert it. It seems to me my thoughts are always dragging some yards behind the movement of my will. I felt that even in listening to G.E. many things dropped because I was lingering over something collateral.(19)

On 3 June 1870 Snow had tea with George Eliot. They discussed the new Girton College and the recent trip that George Eliot and George Lewes had taken to Berlin and Vienna.

Snow described the afternoon to Emily:

> "Then she got into her old vein, the duty of resignation. 'The consideration of sharing in the evils and blessings of life, and how small a portion of the share of good can fall to the lot of any one of us. The idea of justice is the idea of division. No doubt it was a great discovery at first that a whole could be divided into equal parts. Then came the equal claim, we are all equally hungry. And that is the foundation of the idea - to see that we have that portion of good which fails to one out of many such creatures as we'. I protested here; I said I went along with her in her sense of a readiness for a consideration of inevitable evil and that I saw it was the part of wisdom to recede from any struggle against inevitable barriers, whatever those barriers might be, but I cd. not call it resignation, till it became submission to a Person. I wish I could reproduce the effect of her answer upon me - it was something I cd. hardly have imagined. She sd. that the one form of faith with which she had sympathy was Dogmatic Christianity, and that of all theological positions, Philosophical Theism was that which appeared to her least tenable. 'The whole conception is anthropomorphic, and pure Theism is a mere extract of that, omitting all that makes it coherent and therefore has no standing ground." But Christianity, she went on to say with a wonderful mournfulness and humility, she could not continue to hold, - and giving up that, she could only feel that her faith must be founded on human relations. With regard to what lay beyond, her only sense of duty was in resignation to inevitable

> ignorance, but there was an instinct which demanded Religion, and which shared in the "illimitableness of all human instincts, far overflowing all that we call its reasons, - as indeed is the case with every individual love."... I feel as if with her I were travelling along a familiar road that led homewards, and then she suddenly turned off on a wild heath just as the home came into view, and the daylight faded. Some things she says so specially waken my sympathy - to-day when she was speaking of the wonderful effect of other persons upon herself, and said, "a look or a word sometimes blights my life for hours" - I wondered how it could be, that her experience and mine could so precisely coincide when everything but feeling was so different. I never met anyone but her who matched my sense of helplessness under the influence of certain personalities.(20)

George Eliot's "helplessness under the influence of certain personalities" obviously included her father, her brother, John Chapman, Herbert Spencer, George Lewes and, later, John Cross; but how, apart from her relationship with her father, could Snow justify such a circumstance for herself? Had she been helpless under the influence of Browning, she would have ignored both her father and conventional society (as George Eliot did) and married him. Over a five or six year period, during the time the Leweses lived at the Priory on Regent's Canal in London, Snow must have seen George Eliot fairly regularly, as did Browning. Although there was a fifteen year age gap between the two women, it was not entirely a one-sided relationship, nor was there anything of a mother-daughter element in it. After the publication of her poem The Spanish Gypsy, George Eliot was extremely depressed, and Barbara Bodichon[21] wrote to Snow for her help.

> ... I shall be doubly grateful to you if you will write me a full letter about the poem of George Eliot. I cannot remember all you said & I want now to help her with some words of appreciation hearty & affectionate - tell me all you feel about it. She is suffering from one of her fits of self-depreciation & I

> was astonished to see how my very poor & bare 2nd hand report of your delight in her work encouraged her.(22)

Snow complied with twelve pages of praise.

> ... I never felt in anything else (or only in Browning's poetry) that same complete fusion of passionate feeling & complex intellectual ideas. I felt in reading certain passages as if the spirit of all that was deepest in my life were distilled from circumstance & given in its purest form... A more expressible & not less peculiar excellence of that poem seems to me that one gets the white light of the purest heroism without any blackness of villainy. That is not only so much more welcome to one's mind, but it is so much deeper a truth, the ignorance & mistakes of poor humanity being quite enough to bring out all the nobility of a heroic soul into the strongest relief. I can't help feeling this so much in contrast to The Ring & The Book of which the very converse seems to me to be true.(23)

With the publication of Middlemarch which came out in part in 1871 and 1872, Snow wrote directly to George Eliot:

> I wonder whether you are stifled by letters about Middlemarch, dear friend? If so, throw mine into the fire, for I doubt not that many have said something very like what I feel about it. My feeling is that there must be a great regenerative force in any book that paints so clearly the border land of Evil where most of us, in this undramatic world, spend the chief part of our lives... One other thought that came to me vividly was the horror of unlovingness which makes one realize the comparative slightness of what otherwise wd seem the supreme dread of being unloved... It is a precious gift - & a great responsibility to interpret to each of us so much of the experience which perhaps you cd not imagine. I wd not write this if you were obliged to answer. I sometimes feel almost ashamed of having been so presumptuous as to know you, but now there is no help for it but that I must be always affec. yrs F J W (24)

Snow put George Eliot on a pedestal, just as she had done with

all the men in her life whom she deemed superior to herself, but there was none of the passion and self-sacrifice which complicated her relations with men. There was the right distance between them to make for a comfortable relationship that apparently suited them both. "I have had such a sweet little note from G.E.," Snow wrote to Ellen Tollett. "She says she is too busy and unwell to see me but she wants me to write to reassure her 'that our spiritual relation' is unbroken. I have done so quite sincerely, yet something in this book, wonderful as it is, has put a little remoteness into our relation."(25) (26)

Now that she had reached mid-life, Snow's world was changing, not so much in its pattern or structure, but in the lives of many among her friends and family. Snow observed to Emily the change in her friend Meta Gaskell:

> When I first knew her, she was in daily life one of the most trying people I ever knew - that uncomfortable idea one sums up in the word <u>inconsiderate</u>. Between her and her mother there was a kind of mutual idolatry which I think from the issue I must have judged harshly. Since her mother's death 5 years ago, she has turned into the most faultless housekeeper, the most orderly methodical hostess, the most devoted unselfish daughter to a <u>not</u> idealised father I ever saw - really without exaggeration, I think her great grief has worked a miracle in her. My relations with her mother were disappointing and it is impossible to appreciate a friend who has disappointed one, but I think from the undying, passionate love she inspired she must have been a nobler character than I thought...(27)

In 1871 her cousin Henrietta Darwin married Richard Buckley Litchfield(28) whom she and Effie had met in London at the Vernon Lushingtons.(29) Effie was having something of an amateur musical career, giving recitals in small halls and at private parties. Her Uncle Erasmus told Henrietta: "Effie is singing her head off, and I am going to-day to hear her in Brook Street before she has quite worn herself out. Hope on the contrary is magnifying her head, and has just

called en route to Logic with her "srp" (scrip), her last new invention, of which she is very proud."[30] Hope had invented a kind of shorthand based on phonetics and symbols, which made her letters extremely difficult to read. She was interested in philosophy and mathematics, and she and Henrietta had taken private lessons in geometry.

Lady Inglis died in October of 1872, and Mary Rich left Bedford Square after a squabble with Marianne Thornton, Lady Inglis's executrix and chief heiress, over the division of the silver. This greatly embarrassed Fanny and Hensleigh. Because of a quarrel over the division of a pair of salt spoons, Mary Rich declared she would never again speak to Marianne Thornton. And she didn't.

Mary returned to live with Fanny and Hensleigh at Cumberland Place. All six of Fanny and Hensleigh's children were still living at home. Ernest worked in the Colonial Office. Alfred, who had left the Navy after two years, spent a fair amount of time travelling. In June of 1872 he married Rosina Margaret Ingall, daughter of Richard Ingall, a civil engineer living in Valparaiso, who also had an estate in Surrey. Fanny and Hensleigh decided at this time also to build a country home in Surrey, near Dorking, which they named Hopedene, after their youngest daughter. They also decided to keep a house in town and moved from Cumberland Place to 31 Queen Anne Street so "our mother won't have the bother of a daily cab ride" when visiting their Uncle Ras at his house. Hensleigh continued as a director of a number of businesses and organizations, and, for the most part, was successful in his investments. One conspicuous instance in which he was not, however, was the Aerated Bread Company in which he bought a good deal of stock, meanwhile advising various friends to do so too. When the company failed, he personally paid his friends the difference between the devalued shares and the amount of their original investment, a selfless moral act which surprised acquaintances almost as much as the resignation of his Magistracy over the principle of oaths.

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F.D. Maurice died in Cambridge on 1 April, 1872 but was buried in London. Snow described the funeral in a letter to Jane Gourlay:

> There was an immense gathering at Highgate. Some faces so full of feeling it seemed worth having gone there to look at them. Stanley's specially impressed me, perhaps because I did not expect him to care much. But in some ways that kind of crowd is disappointing. I cd not get into the chapel & only with grt difficulty near the grave - & I cd not help wishing they had accepted the Westminster Abbey proposal where we crowd of heterogenous mourners might have had every help in realising our union, such as it was. However it is perhaps a more suitable close that his bones shd be laid to rest beside those of his father & mother in that unpretending commonplace cemetery - & as the coffin was being lowered into the earth the sudden song of a thrush came to me with a suggestion of hope & brightness I cannot describe - much more than the Abbey organ cd have given. Oh how much in a funeral is dreary, & needlessly dreary it seems to me. That terrible array of mourning coaches & the bearers staggering under the pall! - it makes one long for a pyre & the flame that shd make an end of the worn out garment the wearer needs no more! But dear beloved man how reproachfully does his image contemplate me for speaking lightly of the ordinances of his Church on the very day he has used them for the last time! Would he have let that little bird give me that gleam of hope I wonder if he had known I was also rebelling against that last Prayer? I cannot bear the words of thankfulness at that moment, they seem unreal. This is <u>nothing</u> in comparison with Mr Erskine's death - But it impoverishes the lives of many among those I know well. He was not to me a great Teacher - but he was the best Man I ever knew & the world seems wonderfully emptier without him.(31)

Each year Snow made a pilgrimage to Linlathen, and each year the experience seemed to become more painful and more vivid. Strangely, she felt that Jane Gourlay was able to enter more into her feelings about Erskine than Emily, who "saw him through a certain medium that was quite wanting to my view of him. In some ways she loved him better than I did, at least her love was less critical - but I feel his memory to me is 1000 times what it is to her."(32)

After a visit she had made to Linlathen, Jane Gourlay wrote her feelings to Snow who replied:

> Oh if to me the library seems often "an eyeless skull" what must it have been to you in every room & every corner! My vision was of his coming down the corridor looking all dazed & with that sort of half tipsy look he had sometimes & the battered old wide awake & the high buttoned over-boots - a very little more & I shd have sd "There he is!"(33)

In June of 1874 Snow and Emily attended an Evangelical meeting at Broadlands in Hampshire, formerly the home of Lord Palmerston, and at the time owned by his step-son Lord Mount Temple. About 200 people gathered there on the green lawns in front of the house's pillared portico to hear the preachings of an American couple, Hannah and Robert Pearsall Smith. Formerly Quakers from Philadelphia, they had created their own brand of Evangelical religion which was associated with no single denomination or sect. Their appeal was to call to a state of Holiness among those who already believed. They popularized revival meetings which were held outdoors and which lasted several days. At Broadlands about fifty of the participants, including Snow and Emily, stayed in the house as guests of Lord and Lady Mount Temple; others boarded in the neighbouring village while yet others camped in the park. The Smiths met with an enormous success, attributed to the apparent simplicity and efficiency of the methods they advocated for conquering sin. Hannah was particularly effective with the feminists. Both Emily and Snow were impressed. Emily naturally associated the experience at Broadlands with the supernatural episodes she was having. And, after Broadlands, Snow wrote to Ellen Tollett: "I cannot help joining Spiritualism with the new religious emotion as signs that we are entering on a new phase of Spiritual life, in which we are acted upon by unseen forces that are not necessarily embodied in any intellectual or moral form."(34)

Spiritualism was society's new fashionable interest. There was nothing particularly odd about dabbling in it. Indeed it was rumoured that the Queen herself had used a medium to communicate with Albert in "the other world." In January of 1874 Erasmus Darwin arranged a séance at his house on Queen Anne Street and employed a Mr. Williams as the medium. The guests or participants were Charles and Emma Darwin, Henrietta and Richard Litchfield, Hensleigh and Fanny Wedgwood, Alfred and his new wife Margaret, George Eliot and George Lewes, and Snow, Effie and Hope. There were the usual manifestations of wind blowing and rappings on the table, but no one was particularly impressed.

It was difficult for people to know what to believe. Though Effie and Hope knew George Eliot only slightly, she had an impressive influence on their views of life and Society. Emily and Russell Gurney were in America, and Snow wrote to Emily:

> You know how we all feel about men and marriage. I think - well she has had a very mellowing influence on them in that particular. I think they have learnt to look at life more with her indulgent eyes (though they do think them too indulgent, and that she loses something of a moral standpoint in her laxity) and to see that the half of mankind that has few temptations cannot judge of the half that has many, - and to feel too that the best life is the union of the male and female element in it. It seems absurd to put down this truism as a discovery, but it is so to them. Euphemia said mournfully "It is a dreary time when one's theories all tumble to pieces about one's ears" but yet I think she has felt more in harmony with the world since she has given up her old-maidish theory, - though she cannot give it up in more than theory. I feel so constantly that we dwell too exclusively in the <u>woman's world</u>, - and see only one half of truth in consequence.(35)

Snow was quite wrong about Effie's being able to give up her old-maidish theory <u>only</u> in theory. In the same year that Alfred married, Fanny Erskine, who had married Hensleigh's close friend Thomas Henry Farrer, died after a lengthy illness, leaving her husband with four children. Within the year Farrer had proposed to Effie who promptly refused him with the declaration that she had no intention of marrying

anyone and that she certainly was not in love with him. Farrer was more persistent than Godfrey had been and refused to take no for an answer. He was a constant visitor at Queen Anne Street and at Hopedene and was moved to tears every time Effie sang.

Sir Thomas Farrer was an exceptional man in many ways and, despite some drawbacks, exactly the sort of man suited for Effie. Twenty years older than she, he was authoritarian and tough-minded, yet in a few personal relationships he was extremely sentimental. People either liked him or feared him, and in only a few instances did it matter to him which. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he was practicing at the Bar when his Eton friend - afterwards his brother-in-law - Sir Stafford Northcote, then at the Board of Trade, gave him a bill to draft, which became the Merchant Shipping Act. Soon afterwards he joined the Board of Trade, where he remained for thirty-six years. He framed the Bankruptcy Act, legislation affecting regulation of the railways and Acts of Parliament dealing with electric lights. In the period 1872-1888, almost all reforms of and additions to the system of commercial law were only brought about with his concurrence. He often remarked that the Civil Service was "a capital career for those who prefer power to fame." Farrer was a man of power, and Effie was attracted to power. Farrer's marriage to Fanny Erskine had been, as far as anyone could judge, extremely happy. Certainly there was no shortage of money, and an elegant, commanding style of living was as much Farrer's taste as Effie's. After a year of his persistent pursuit, Effie, then aged thirty-six, relented. Snow wrote to Jane Gourlay:

> Things have been so upset with us that everything has been shaken out of its place. My sister's engagement to Thomas Henry Farrer has been an earthquake to this house. She was a great friend of his first wife who was, you perhaps know, our cousin Fanny Erskine... He is agreeable, able, accomplished and amiable - I suppose one ought to be satisfied with all this. He is also most devotedly in love with her. I have never seen livelier

> affection in a young man, which is a stupid thing to say however for affection is altogether livelier in the old. He has a daughter of 18 almost as much in love with Effie as he is & 3 boys... I believe no human being ever entered on the change with more unselfish motives than she has done... She was quite happy with us & did not wish to marry but cd not resist the appeal of his desolation & resolute clinging to her. He is not a very strong character though a very ardent & impetuous one. My Aunt feels a good deal about it both ways. She has wished it intensely, but now she is a little feeling that somebody else is to be put in Fanny's place.(36)

No sooner had the marriage taken place, in May of 1875, than Godfrey proposed marriage to Hope and was accepted. Both sides of the family had mixed feelings. If Godfrey had been in love with Effie for fifteen years, it might seem that he was marrying Hope only to be closer to Effie, since the sisters were practically inseparable. Yet, from the beginning, the marriage was a happy one, and the two couples became as close and inseparable as the two sisters had always been. Only Snow and Ernest remained unmarried. She was forty-two years old, and as she grew older her piety became more restless, tinged with brooding, questioning mysticism.

She returned to Linlathen. In July of 1876, in a railway carriage leaving Edinburgh with Jane Gourlay, she began a letter to her Aunt Rich, who died a few weeks later. The letter seems almost to anticipate her aunt's death, and it must have been a consolation to Snow that she received it before her death.

> Miss G. & I are making an expedition that you & I made 26 years ago with Fanny & Emma. How strange it is - what to you is so familiar - to revisit the places from which all that we have known are gone! It happens to everyone, & yet it always feels as if it were a sort of discovery to oneself... I was thinking so much on my expedition yesterday of those far away years when you spent so much kindness & thought on me & I so little repaid it. I will not say I little appreciated it for that I always did to some degree but I did not respond to it as I might have done, &

some might have said that it was wasted. But I think it often happens that the love & kindness that is spent upon us does not bear fruit till long after it is given. Often when the givers are no longer here to receive it, though happily not so in this case. All my life wd have been different but for that Journey you took me to Scotland dear Aunt Rich - for my Linlathen life wd never have come if it had not been for that prelude in those far-off years. And what shd I have been without Linlathen! I cannot imagine... (37)

Chapter 10

The Moral Ideal (1876-1905)

> "Most persons desire love, many persons desire power, some desire knowledge, but you cannot say that the wish for any one of these things is absolutely universal. If we want general consent, we must ask not what men desire but what they fear."
>
> Julia Wedgwood
> The Moral Ideal

"Do you think Snow is drinking too much?"[1] Hope wrote to Effie shortly after Snow had visited Staffordshire in the autumn of 1876. She had then gone to Abinger in Surrey, the family seat of the Farrers.

Effie's reply hasn't been preserved. At the time Snow was in one of her despondent moods and wrote to Jane Gourlay:

> I have been passing thro (sic) a dark valley since I wrote last... I have so often lately had a much more vivid apprehension of what Mr Erskine was going thro (sic) in those last dark years. I have the sense of divine truth received for something else than its true meaning - for vanity or self-pleasing - not being translated into life & made the daily bread for work, but used for the purposes of the self merely. I can quite imagine if circumstances were different, that the horror of this conviction might darken the world for me just as he found it did. I do not mean that he wd have used my words to describe his condition, but I feel that the disease is the same. I know the remedy is the same, too. I say to myself, as we used to say to him, that the fountain of righteousness is inexhaustable, that all we need is near us, & that it wants only the open channel of patient, persistent search, discarding all self-originated decisions as to the particular means of entrance, to be admitted to our souls - but sometimes an icy despair comes instead of patience when I try to wait for it.(2)

However depressed and despondent she may have been, she was nonetheless capable of doing quite a lot of intellectual work. Though her book The Moral Ideal was progressing slowly, she was steadily

writing a series of essays for the Spectator on ethical topics and also lecturing at Bedford College. Her parents were living at Hopedene; Ernest was living in the Queen Anne Street house, and three times a week Snow took the train into London. Hensleigh disapproved of Snow's lecturing; Snow wrote to Julia Sterling:

> My father owes them a sad grudge for giving me as he thinks so many headaches & I do sometimes wish I cd turn all my energies here where they cd find scope enough but I am sure it is useful work & one of enjoyment to me.(3)

If Snow had shown promise as an embryonic novelist, she was now, fifteen years later, a brilliant and mature essayist, her writings full of shrewd and thoughtful observation. Possibly because she had found the medium most suited to her abilities, she never returned to the novel. As an essayist she was expressing herself in the world of ideas rather than in the world of feelings, and certainly she was more at ease with intellectual rather than emotional ideas. As she grew older, she became ~~the~~ more stridently intellectual. ~~she became~~. She sent her Uncle Charles a copy of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, which he returned almost immediately with the note that it had "said nothing to him." There were few people with whom she could talk about the ideas which interested her. Richard Holt Hutton was her closest intellectual companion. On what she called a spiritual basis, Emily was still her closest friend.

The older, intellectual generation was ageing, losing energy and will, and dying. Two years earlier, in May of 1875, Fanny Allen, whom Snow called "my little eighteenth century aunt", died at the age of ninety-four. Harriet Martineau died in 1876, and in 1877, Fanny became ill when she was visiting Effie at Abinger. Her complaint was diagnosed as heart disease and the recommended treatment was bed rest. Thus it was decided that Fanny, Hensleigh and Snow would return to Queen Anne Street in London, where medical treatment was readily available, and Alfred and Margaret could live at Hopedene. For country life they could

always visit them or Effie and Sir Thomas at Abinger Hall or Hope and Godfrey in Staffordshire at Caverswall Castle.

After her mother's illness and while she was still recuperating at Abinger, Snow decided not to go to Scotland that summer and wrote to Jane Gourlay:

> A letter from my Father speaks of her enjoyment in watching the haymaking from her window. I have not much hope of any change in her but I think this condition may be a lengthy one. My Father talks of getting a water bed, which as she sits up so much in bed I shd think a doubtful advantage but his Mother found it a great comfort.(4)

However, she chose to spend Christmas of 1877 with Julia and Hester Sterling at The Crag in Falmouth, noting to Emily Gurney that Hope and Godfrey would be coming to be with her mother. Christmas and large family gatherings still brought on depressions, and she continued to avoid them whenever possible, aligning herself with other old maids, such as the Sterling sisters, Jane Gourlay, Alice Bonham Carter or Ellen Tollett.

In June of 1878, Russell Gurney died, and Snow wrote to Jane Gourlay:

> I am just come back from Kensal Green (where Russell Gurney was buried) It was wonderfully moving. Dean Stanley read the service - I did not hear of course but his face as we stood by the grave (in the chapel I did not see it well) was more than any words. She looked ready to take flight. I do not mean physically, indeed I thought she looked rather florid & well - but the sort of soaring rapturous expression was wonderful - it was like seeing some Alpine peak reflect the light of the hidden sun. So strange it was to see several there who had no hope for the Resurrection of the dead. I tried to think how it wd be - but hardly knew whether I was farthest from belief or disbelief.(5)

Snow and Emily saw little of each other over the next year because Emily had decided to travel. Snow's deafness made her nervous and

uncomfortable in crowds of people, so she seldom went out socially any more. At home she used an ear trumpet and tried to have a conversation with only one person at a time. She had developed a routine of rising at five a.m., praying for an hour, writing for two hours and reading for three hours in the afternoon. She had taken over the management of the household from Fanny, who wanted as little responsibility as possible, and, in any event, spent part of each day in bed. Snow had hired a housekeeper, Marian Hughes, who was competent and educated, and soon became more of a companion than a servant. Hensleigh had resigned his directorships and trusteeships, and with Leslie Stephen, whose grandfather had been a part of the Clapham Sect, was working on compiling the first Oxford English Dictionary. Stephen was also Editor of Cornhill, a publication to which Snow frequently contributed. Frederick James Furnival, a well-known philologist and friend of Maurice's, and Herbert Coleridge were also working on the dictionary.

Through Leslie Stephen and Richard Holt Hutton, as well as a number of literary friends in Manchester, both Hensleigh and Snow met Charles Harold Herford. Though he was thirty years younger than Snow, a close friendship developed between them in which he called her Aunt Snow, and she referred to him as her dearest nephew. Herford, who had attended the Working Man's College in Manchester, was Professor of English at Aberystwyth before becoming the first holder of the independent chair of English Literature at Manchester. He was one of the most brilliant scholars of the time, edited numerous biographies and contributed to both the Oxford English Dictionary and the Dictionary of National Biography.

Herford was one of the few people with whom Snow could discuss her own writing, as well as literary theory and criticism in general. Herford also shared the interest that both Snow and Hensleigh had in languages. He spoke German fluently, founded the Goethe Society, and married a German woman whom he brought to meet his Aunt Snow for her approval.

Snow approved and became god-mother to their first child. Equally enamoured of Scandinavian and Russian Literature, Herford learned Norwegian and Russian so that he could make his own translations of Ibsen and Pushkin. He talked over his work with his Aunt Snow, and she advised him on bringing out new editions of Wordsworth, Keats and Shelley and the ten volume Eversley edition of Shakespeare. When he later became Literary Critic of the Manchester Guardian, she frequently contributed articles for him. Their friendship became one of the happiest and long-lasting of Snow's later life.

* * * * *

Josiah Wedgwood III died on 11 March 1880 at the age of eighty-five, and Elizabeth Wedgwood died seven months later at the age of eighty seven. It seemed that all of the older generation of Wedgwoods and Darwins, now ranging in age from their early seventies to mid-eighties were ailing in one way or another. Ras Darwin was confined to his house on Queen Anne Street. Snow, Effie and Hope gave their mother a Bath chair in which she was taken daily by a man servant to visit Ras.

Alfred and Margaret, whose relations with the rest of the family were somewhat strained, had a son Bertram Hensleigh (Berry) born in 1876, and on 15 February 1880, Godfrey and Hope, who had been married for four years and had not planned to have children, had a daughter Mary Euphrasia. Godfrey was aged forty-seven, Hope thirty-six, and Mary's step-brother, Cecil, seventeen.

In 1881 Ras Darwin died with Fanny Wedgwood at his bedside. Caroline Darwin Wedgwood, Ras's eldest sister and the widow of Josiah Wedgwood III, wrote to Fanny: "It is hard on you who have made the happiness of his life; dear Fanny, I hope the shock has not

made you ill."[6] Snow wrote a memorial of her uncle which was published in the Spectator. She described his playfulness, tenderness, humour, lightness of touch and "the peculiar mixture of something pathetic with a sort of gay scorn, entirely remote from contempt... Erasmus Darwin has passed away in old age, yet his memory retains something of a youthful fragrance; his influence gave much happiness of a kind usually associated with youth to many lives."[7]

In December of 1881 Charles Darwin suffered his first heart attack in London; he died at Down on 19 April 1882. A week later he was buried in Westminster Abbey. After considerable persuasion, Emma allowed the nation to honour him, but she did not attend the service. Hensleigh was the only Wedgwood or Darwin of his generation well enough to attend, but he was there with Ernest on one side of him and Snow on the other. At that time, Snow could hardly have imagined that the next funeral at the Abbey that she would attend would be that of Robert Browning.

* * * * *

Over the past ten years the interest in spiritualism among the intelligentsia had increased rather than decreased. After the not-too-successful séance with the Darwins and the George Leweses seven years earlier, Hensleigh had become more interested. Emily Gurney's belief was unshaken, and both Effie and Hope had taken an interest so that, as Snow expressed it, wherever she turned, there was a spirit somebody had summoned. Her father took a serious scientific approach, and in 1882 became one of the founders of the Society for Psychical Research.

The Society's purpose was to investigate without prejudice or prepossession and in a scientific spirit those faculties of man, real or

supposed, which appear to be inexplicable on any generally recognized hypothesis. These investigations encompassed such phenomena as hallucinations, hypnotism, telepathy and clairvoyance.

Though founded in London, the origins of the Society were in Cambridge in the 1850's and 1860's where such distinguished and promising scholars as Edward White Benson, later Archbishop of Canterbury, Henry Sidgwick, Frederic Myers and Edmund Gurney belonged to a University Club known as the "Ghost Society." The establishment of the S.P.R. in London began with over six hundred members and associates. Prof. Sidgwick was the first president, and included among the eleven vice presidents were Prof. Balfour Stewart, F.R.S.; the Right Hon. Arthur J. Balfour, M.P.; the Right Revd. the Bishop of Carlisle; Richard Holt Hutton; Lord Rayleigh; the Right Revd. the Bishop of Ripon and Hensleigh Wedgwood, M.A.

Among the twenty-three corresponding members were The Chevalier Sebastiano Fenzi of Florence, Prof. William James of Harvard and Prof. Pierre Janet of the Lycée du Harve. Honorary members included the Right Hon. W.E. Gladstone, M.P.; John Ruskin, Lord Tennyson and Alfred Russell White. The founders of the S.P.R., and in particular Edmund Gurney, Frederic Myers and Frank Podmore who wrote <u>Phantasms of the Living</u>, sponsored by the Council of the Society, were especially concerned with the effect that their views and research would have on religious belief. Myers wrote in the Introduction:

> For in the first place it is plain that this new science of which we are endeavouring to lay the foundations stands toward religion in a very different position from that occupied by the rising sciences, such as geology or biology, whose conflict or agreement with natural or revealed religion has furnished matter for so much debate. The discoveries of those sciences can scarcely in themselves add support to a doctrine of man's soul and immortality, though they may conceivably come into collision with particular forms which

> that doctrine has assumed. Religion, in short, may be able to assimilate them, but it would in no way have suffered had they proved altogether abortive.
>
> ... I see no probability, I may add, that our results can ever supply a convincing proof to any specialized form of religion. The utmost that I anticipate is, that they may afford a solid basis of general evidence to the independence of man's spiritual nature, and its persistence after death, on which basis, at any rate, religions in their specialised forms may be at one with science, and on which the structure of definite revelation (which must be up-built by historical or moral arguments) may conceivably be planted with a firmness which is at present necessarily lacking.(8)

Snow could hardly fail to take an interest. The S.P.R. was approaching through an organized, scientific group-endeavour what she had attempted over the past fifteen years through introspection and the solitary study of history. In the early 1880's, when she had completed her research and had already written nearly half of The Moral Ideal, the subject, which previously had seemed like dangerous heresy, was suddenly fashionable among the intelligensia. The attempt to reconcile the new study of Science with the old doctrines of Religion was a national obsession.

Stimulated by the vision-life of Swedenborg(9) and the speaking in tongues which occured in the churches founded by Edward Irving,(10) many intelligent and educated people believed that such unexplained psychic phenomena sustained rather than discredited religion. Everyone seemed to be having or wanting to have some extra-sensory experience. Naturally there were many instances of deception and fraud, particularly with those experiences involving communication with the dead. Recent advances in physiology had ruthlessly cast out the old-fashioned, moralist notions of character and free will.

The vaunted notion of personality itself had been reduced to a shifting and unstable synergy of nerve centres. More lessons were to be learned from studying the lives of lunatics than the lives of saints.

"The prevalent temper of the age," Myer wrote in 1886, "is not so much materialistic as agnostic."(11) People simply did not know what was happening in what previously had been assumed to be an orderly and unchanging world. Because the decay and dissolution of human beings seemed so much more capable of being truly known than their survival or further evolution, the theologian's reassuring voice was supplanted by the sharp pronouncements of scientists or "mad doctors".

As fear replaced hope, the attempt to reconcile apparent contradictions by observing the moment of death became an investigative obsession. If phantasms or apparitions sanctified by Religion and verified by Science were to include the dead as well as the living, the evidence for life after death would be conclusive. Hence, in part, the Victorian preoccupation with death-bed scenes. Perhaps with the dying one might observe the spirit leaving the body or one might be given a confirmation of the after-life through the words of a dying person "passing over." There were, however, further uncertainties. While life after death is an established doctrine of Christianity, there is no dogma as to the possibility that communications can be established with departed spirits.

Emily Gurney fervently believed that departed spirits did indeed communicate with the living. Through voices and visions both during dreams and during conscious awakenings, Emily saw and heard and spoke with her dead mother, though not her dead husband. This communication was not one single overwhelming event but a series of almost weekly occurrences over a period of nearly ten years. The persistence of Mrs Batten's ghost was what finally cooled the ardent friendship between Emily and Snow. Though she was unfailingly sympathetic, Snow was not entirely convinced of Mrs Batten's ghostly reality. The regularity of her appearances and the constant outpourings of love for her daughter seemed to Snow more like projections of Emily's heated imagination than the free movement of a spirit from the other world.

After Emily's death in 1895, when Snow was editing their

correspondence, she noted a letter Emily had written to her in 1876, when Aunt Rich was dying. "Beloved Snow," wrote Emily, "I am wondering whether that death bed & that departure will reveal to you any missed light in her who has been so close to you."[12] In the margin, in purple ink, Snow succinctly replied: "Can't say that it did."

Another sceptic was her cousin George Darwin, now a Cambridge astronomer, who had two sessions with the American medium Mrs Piper. In 1886 Richard Hodgson of the S.P.R. and the eminent Harvard psychologist William James, who was later (1894-1895) president of the S.P.R., had reported remarkable results with Mrs Piper. She was invited to England as the guest of the S.P.R. In London, Hensleigh, Alfred and Margaret had sessions with her and were apparently impressed. In Cambridge George Darwin and his brother Frank had sessions in which they concealed their true identities by calling themselves Smith. George Darwin then sent into the Society a lengthy and detailed report with the disheartening conclusion: "I remain wholly unconvinced either of any remarkable powers or of thought-transference."[13]

Thought-transference was, however, in quite a different category from communication with the dead either directly or through a medium. That Snow gave some credence to thought-transference, or, in any event, believed the possibility worth investigating is evidenced by a dream she reported to the S.P.R. in March 1886, along with the information that her companion Marian Hughes, who was in the same room as Snow, had been reading a remarkably similar episode in a novel. That same night, a few hours later, Snow dreamed a vivid dream similar to an episode Marian had been reading in the novel Clarissa's Tangled Web. Snow wrote to the S.P.R:

> I am quite sure that Marian Hughes read not a word aloud, and did not mention to me any of the circumstances which reproduced themselves with the grotesque triviality of such things in my dream, and that I did not

> know anything of the contents of the book... We went to bed at the same time, and I had a vivid dream of meeting two children in the street (there is only one in the book), and getting into a conversation with the girl about building. The only sentence which remains with me is the absurd one, 'What! don't you know that all the heart of oak used in England comes from Florence? where she told me she had lived all her life. I had a vivid sense in my dream of the intelligence and rare knowledge of the little girl, and when I opened the book at p.38 it came to me with an almost startling sense of familiarity...(14)

What is remarkable about Snow's dream and her comments upon it is not so much thought-transference as her own lack of perception about symbolic meanings. Throughout the ages dreams have been a subject for speculation; prophecies and symbolic associations would surely have been familiar to her from her study of the Bible. Still, it seems fairly obvious that had she been conscious of certain logical inferences she would not have submitted the dream to the Society.

Once a month either Snow or Ernest accompanied Hensleigh to the Society's meetings, though frequently Alfred and Margaret, who now had a second son James (Jem) born in 1882, came up to London for the meetings. Margaret, who believed that she herself possessed psychic powers, contributed various papers on telepathy and clairvoyance to the Society.

* * * * *

From a purely literary point of view, the two decades between 1875 and 1895 were not only the most productive but also the finest era of Snow's writing. Between the ages of her early forties and her mid-sixties, her creative and analytical powers were at their peak. She wrote over a hundred biographical and philosophical essays as well as the two metaphysical books The Moral Ideal and The Message of Israel.

Her biographical sketches are immensely readable a hundred years later. Of course, in the instances of Maurice, Erskine, Kingsley, Hutton, Carlyle, Dean Stanley, James Fitzjames Stephen, George Eliot and John Ruskin, she knew them personally and the intimate personal view

brings the subject alive, but she didn't know personally all of the people about whom she wrote - Coleridge, for example.

> He was a poet, and he was also a thinker. We need look no further than to a group including Keats and Scott to see that a poet is not necessarily a thinker... It is not an unmixed advantage in this short life to have undertaken more than one kind of intellectual endeavour, even if the endeavour be successful. An extended frontier is an increased vulnerable surface, and the very wealth of natures like Coleridge's is a source of their danger.(15)

Of Dean Stanley she wrote:

> Arthur Stanley's life, among its many other points of interest, has that of being the last which belonged to the old state of things. There are thoughtful liberals in the Church of England, as there are elsewhere, but they no longer form a party... He could not bear cutting adrift the Church of England from the life of the nation. To him Disestablishment took the aspect of a surrender of all that was the source of healthy life; an exchange of a wide, clear outlook, for something narrow and petty; a giving up of the broad judicial views of statesmen for the prejudices of squabbling priests.(16)

Of Carlyle, she said:

> Human character is a many-sided thing, and every true description of a human being must be full of apparent contradictions. We do not think Carlyle was especially so; his inconsistencies were all lighted up by genius, but he was about as consistent as most people.(17)

At this period in her life Snow had perhaps come to terms with what her own life was and what it would be in the future. "I am always clinging to human love & breaking it down by my weight," she wrote to Jane Gourlay. "The happiness of Linlathen was that there was nothing of this there. I never felt any temptation toward it with Mr E. But everywhere else it has been the rhythm of my life. This is exactly idolatry."(18)

The older she became the more out-spoken she became. She had little patience and was not one to suffer fools lightly. In reply to

a letter from Jane Gourlay, condemning intellectual non-believers, she wrote:

> I am sorry to say I disagree with the chief part of your letter, especially about Miss Martineau... Great minds, to which the scriptures are familiar, do not reject Christianity for want of a few words to sweep away misunderstandings. Indeed I believe hardly anyone does. What is there to shew <u>you</u> the nature of Xtianity that H.M. & G.E. have not possessed? Will you say the teaching of Erskine & Scott be? (sic) I believe that the only effect of that teaching on those women wd have been a certain dramatic appreciation in the Genius & intense boredom in the clever woman. G.E. certainly had studied with interest every phase of Xtianity. As she once said to me 'There is nothing in it in regard to which I have the slightest difficulty, except that I see no evidence for it whatever.'... I always marvel how one who has seen so much of life as you have do not see that what really turns the mind away from Xtianity, in our day certainly - perhaps to a large extent always - is not this or that difficulty, but simply a disbelief in the whole unseen world. They see no evidence for the very existence of those realities you wish to re-arrange in their vision, & so they find their life elsewhere... In H.M.'s case I think you so underrate the enormous importance of her denial of immortality & her <u>delight</u> in the thought. How cd that state of mind receive the very thought of things unseen?
>
> Having made such protest against yr letter, I must tell you that it has greatly interested my Mother as indeed yr letters always do... (19)

In the spring of 1885 Snow interrupted her work on <u>The Moral Ideal</u> to accompany her parents, both of whom were in poor health, to visit Hope and Godfrey in Staffordshire, where they were building a new house, Idlerocks, closer to the Etruria factory and modern in comparison with Caverswall Castle. With Hensleigh's brother Frank they all made a sentimental trip back to Maer for a day, and Snow wrote to Effie that Uncle Frank came into the room "like a sunbeam."

Sir Thomas Farrer, who was called Theta within the family circle, had also been in poor health. A close friend of Joseph Chamberlain's,

he resigned his position on the Board of Trade, though he and Effie still retained the house in London as well as Abinger Hall, and he accepted a position on the newly formed London County Council. Eight years later in 1894, when Lord Rosebery was Prime Minister, he was elevated to the peerage as Lord Farrer of Abinger.

Effie had taken up the new craze of bicycling which had swept the country with the patenting of the safety bicycle in 1886. At the same time Hope became a vegetarian. But, in 1887, Ernest, who was then aged fifty, surprised everyone by suddenly marrying Mary Webster, an orphaned young woman who had no dowry and who was estranged from her adopted parents. While she and Snow were friendly, though their interests were not compatible, Snow thought it best to abdicate the role of mistress of the house to Mary, now that her mother was bedridden. Even more surprising and distressing was Alfred's abrupt decision to separate from his wife, leave her in the house in Surrey, go abroad and place his two young sons, then aged five and eleven, in the care of his sister Snow. That the house in Queen Anne Street with its two frail octogenarians was not the most congenial environment for two active boys also probably influenced Snow's decision to take a house of her own with Marian as her housekeeper and companion.

Snow's devotion to and absorption with Alfred's children filled a need in her own life which she had not acknowledged before. Both Effie and Hope had acquired step-children when they married, and then Hope and Godfrey had produced Mary, who was a joy to her aunts as well as her parents. With the two boys, Snow and Marian moved to a smaller house on Bryanston Square near the Farrers. Berry and Jem spent holidays at Abinger and Idlerocks, though neither Hope nor Effie would have anything to do with their mother, who, in their view, was shirking her responsibilities. Snow took a more tolerant view, and, for the children's sake, kept the channels of communication open.

Another surprise event in the family, which met with mixed emotions, was the marriage on 18 July 1888 of Godfrey's son Cecil to Lucie Gibson, the governess of his little half-sister Mary.

In spite of family difficulties and changes, Snow, now aged fifty-five, was happier than she had been at any period in her life. The passions and inner conflicts which had so tormented her early years had abated. For the first time in her life she had a house of her own and a life more or less independent of her parents. The Moral Ideal was published in the summer of 1888, and the reviews were unanimously favourable. Somewhat to her own surprise, Snow discovered that she was a celebrity. Her novels were brought out in new editions under her own name and there was a third edition of her biography of Wesley. Her Aunt Emma Darwin a few years earlier had remarked of F.D. Maurice's major work: "... if I could keep to my resolution of never even trying to understand him I should quite enjoy the book."(20) Emma and others not only enjoyed Snow's book but understood it and were impressed by the originality of thought as well as its complexity and clarity. Effie and Hope, who in the past had complained of their sister's "endless dark sentences of doom and gloom," were extravagant in their praise. Even Hensleigh, who had been so critical of his daughter's imaginative powers, at long last gave the approval that had been withheld for so many years.

The Moral Ideal was dedicated to Browning, though he was mentioned not by name but as "an old friend." Snow confided to her sisters, to Marian, to Emily and to C.H. Herford who the old friend was. She also sent a copy of the book to Browning but received no reply. Unknown to her, he was in Italy where he died on 12 December 1889. She never knew whether or not he read her book. Nor did she ever meet his sister Sariana. With Emily Gurney she attended the burial service in Westminster Abbey, but she did not write a biographical sketch of him as she had done of so many of her famous friends.

The lengthy dedication of The Moral Ideal summarizes her intentions in writing the book and, with its personal tone, is reminiscent of the letters she wrote to Browning so long ago.

TO AN OLD FRIEND

> The following pages, little as they justify such a description, represent the thoughts and endeavours of more than twenty years. When, after so long an effort, we have reached a stage where we are forced to recognise, with however little satisfaction to ourselves, that something is concluded which must stand as the goal of endeavour, and take its chance as a chapter of achievement, we look around for some sympathising spectator of our work, some criticism tinged with the desire to approve. You will not wonder that at such a moment I turn to an old friend; you will recognise it as natural that I should address words meant for the public, in the first instance, to you.
>
> The title I have chosen, though I can find none better, does not cover the ground I have sought to explore. I should better have described my aim had I called the book a History of Human Aspiration; but while such a title would have seemed an ironic introduction to any volume of its size and informal character, the sketches which follow cannot be called a History of anything. To an ordinary reader, the mere list of headings will suggest the debris of a gigantic scheme, without a centre and without a scale, begun at intervals here and there and abandoned as often. The review of human thought which lingers over the utterance of an individual, or quits all limitation of race and nation to describe the feelings of an age and the speculations roused by a dawning faith, may well be thought, in its neglect of all obvious method, to embody the mere fancies of a dreamer. I am not afraid that it will bear that aspect to you. In the execution of my design you will certainly find much failure and probably some blunders, while you will look in vain for a suggestion of an idea not already familiar to you; but you will not be offended by the apparent desultoriness of the scheme. Where the space given to description keeps a common measure with the period of time described, there, we may be sure, but little of the inner life is revealed to the reader. In the perspective of an individual memory, years dwindle to a point, and moments expand to an age. A true biography, were such a one possible, would measure its progress by some other standard than the dates

> which mark advance from the cradle to the tomb; and the historian can hardly more than the biographer afford to forget that, as it has been finely said, "God has so arranged the chronometry of our spirits that there shall be thousands of silent moments between the striking hours." The criticism that the writer of a moral history follows no obvious scale and respects no obvious limits is in fact a recognition that he has ignored all that would shackle him in recording those throbs and pulsations which make up the true life of Man.
>
> The true life of Man! there you at least will be with me. In asserting that the history of aspiration is the clue to all history, I shall not appear to you to make any extravagant claim for the Unseen. You believe, even more firmly than I do, that a partial and incomplete revelation of what men have sought to be, tells us more of their true nature than does the most exhaustive record possible of what they have accomplished. "The word outlasts the deed," says a singer who saw the greatest deeds of Greece. The member of a less vocal race may expand that saying; the thought outlasts the word. Aspiration exceeds utterance, as utterance exceeds achievement. The endeavour to illustrate this truth for those who believe it, to set beside the picture of human action the suggestion of those feelings in which it finds its spring - this is an aim in which I have no doubt of your approval. As I lay down the pen, I find that conviction is enough for me; and although your sympathy perchance be given rather to the worker than the work, I know that if you can care for what I have written, sooner or later one or two others will feel its meaning and enter into the vast consolation and hope bound up in the thoughts I have striven to follow, and the convictions which they have strengthened, deepened, and purified.(21)

Herford, who later wrote a biography of Browning, described The Moral Ideal as a "prose expression of Browning's poetry." While that has more of the ring of editorial enthusiasm than actual intention on the author's part, there are some paragraphs in the book which give credence to that theory. "Genius, however we reconcile that truth with others not less certain, implies always a certain moral impartiality; hence its dangers," Snow wrote. "Not that the moral sympathies are feeble, but that it is manifold, that they are balanced. There is fierce wrath, there is passionate love, but wherever we can distinguish the poet's feeling it sympathises with both."(22) From this statement it

would seem that Snow relented and regretted her harsh criticism of Browning for giving equal treatment to portrayals of good and evil in The Ring and the Book. Nearly a century later it is difficult to appreciate the interest and enthusiasm with which The Moral Ideal was received. It is a philosophical work of immense erudition which clarifies and consolidates rather than offers some new hypothesis. Its readers were no more the so-called "average readers" than the readers of Plato or Hegel or Hume. It was a book for intellectuals to reassure intellectuals; for, nearly thirty years after the publication of On the Origin of Species, the battle between Science and Religion, or the frustrations experienced by their conflicts and contradictions, was still being felt. Probably it was being felt even more, since it takes time for new ideas to have any discernable impact. The Moral Ideal, with its positive approach to both Science and Religion and its emphasis upon a process of Moral Evolution, had the great advantage of pleasing everyone and offending no one. It incorporated the new study of psychology with the old study of history, hinting at the wisdom of a "positive thinking" approach to life. Apart from the problem of good versus evil, which is treated separately, the attraction of antithesis is depicted as the way to a higher moral life, as the physical love between a man and woman, the collective and the selective love, the combination of Knowledge and Faith.

The structure of the book is not as haphazard as Snow claimed in the dedication. The first four chapters review the history of nations or cultures which have peaked and then declined in world influence, countries which still exist but which, in the vernacular, have had their day. She compares them at the height of their glory, in their decline and as they are today. For example, Greece at the end of the nineteenth century is only in a geographical sense the Greece of Leonidas and Pericles. In discussing various ancient cultures - India, Persia, Greece, Rome - she not only illustrates with anecdotes but also

compares with the beliefs and attitudes of late nineteenth century England.

> Doubtless our island, our race, and our language must remain, as far as we can see, while the world lasts, but in the sense that Greece has persisted we must allow that England may perish... No son of England may welcome the light of sunset for his country, as any wise man may welcome it for himself. No cosmopolitan claim swallows up the duty of national self-preservation as every national claim swallows up the duty of individual self-preservation; and while the man who gives his life for his country is a hero, the country in which the aim arose to give up its life for the world would already have ceased to be a nation.(23)

The style of writing is vigorous, even entertaining, with a refreshing presentation of ideas which, as she states in the dedication, may not be new but which are expressed in a lively and comprehensible manner. She is not preaching, nor is she totally absorbed in religious attitudes. In her discussion of India, she observes:

> A race which finds its dominating interest in the Unseen seems to miss some spring of development. Hitherto, at all events, what we call progress has involved the clash of this interest with something below itself. A people knowing nothing of the claims of that which we mean by a Church would be quite unlike anything we have known hitherto in the evolution of humanity. But if the Church be everything, if there be no representative of merely secular interests, the race to which it belongs drops out of the forward march of nations.(24)

Having discussed the dualism of Persian ideals in contrast to the Indian desire for a return to primal unity, she illustrates a similar dualism in English history: "While Puritan England was absorbed in the conflict of good and evil, the contemporary movement of science - the start of our Royal Society, the career of Newton - embodied the counteracting influence which at all times either provokes or is provoked by the spirit of dualism."(25)

Following the chapters on the golden age of earlier cultures and the decline following the end of the Roman Empire, which she calls the Age of Death, she then discusses the theological problems of the Human

Trinity, the Problem of Evil and the Fall of Man. The final chapter is titled "Male and Female Created He Them." All of these theological topics are discussed with contemporary scientific development or with the development of thought about the material as well as the spiritual world. "When Galileo and Newton had forced the world to recognise that Heaven, if it was anywhere, was everywhere, morals took a new direction," she writes. "The antithesis of Heaven and Earth vanished from the inward as well as the outward world. Human nature became more interesting for its own sake."(26)

The appeal of the book for readers at the close of the nineteenth century was two-fold - its reassurance that two Truths, one Scientific and one Spiritual, can exist compatibly; and its reassurance in the inevitability of human progress. "Human progress, as we have said, may be mapped out as the zigzag path up a mountain. It turns to the right, and returns to the left, but not to its original level."(27)

This was precisely the message that the educated upper classes at the close of the Victorian era wanted to hear - the world and its inhabitants were progressing toward an ideal world, which was, of course, an English world of English speaking people. Though no doubt accidental on Snow's part, The Moral Ideal was one of those books which came into being at precisely the right moment. Snow articulated what was being felt or groped for, but which had not yet been coherently understood. The book was both an advance in common sense and a commercial success.

In 1889, when it went into a second edition, less than a year after the first edition, the publisher Trübner & Co. added several pages of what was titled Opinions of the Press on the First Edition. Needless to say, the opinions were high praise. Several of these complimentary reviews are interesting not only in terms of critical thought about the book itself and about the entire field of ethical

philosophy but also about the general attitude toward intellectual women in the nineteenth century.

A quotation from the Scotsman notes: "By an examination and analysis of history and of human nature the accomplished lady whose name appears on the title-page of 'The Moral Ideal' seeks to trace the development of the moral life of humanity." . . . Had the author been a man, one doubts that the reviewer would have used the coy and condescending phrase of "the accomplished gentleman whose name appears on the title page."

The quotation from the Spectator notes: "Miss Wedgwood's subject is much more than 'The Moral Ideal,' and she treats it in a masculine fashion which shows us the large intellectual background without which moral ideals could never have grown to any fulness of maturity..."

That rationality is not an exclusively masculine province is expressed by Manchester Guardian, but the tone of the writing is condescending and chauvinistic. "Woman has undoubtedly played a noble part in the development of the moral ideal, and the sympathetic reader of Miss Julia Wedgwood's latest work will be thankful to come into contact with a fresh and charming proof of this great fact."

Snow was a scholar whose opinions counted. This recognition could not have come at a more propitious time.

* * * * *

Six months before Browning's death and nearly a year after the publication of The Moral Ideal, Fanny, who had been bedridden for two years, died and was buried in the tomb with her father and sister at St. John's in Hampstead. After such a long illness her death could only be thought a release. Even Hensleigh, who shortly afterward suffered a serious illness himself, murmured "Thank God" when Godfrey told him the news of his wife's death. All three daughters had returned to Queen Anne Street and had taken turns at her bedside during the last

forty-eight hours.

After the funeral service Ernest, his wife Mary and Hensleigh returned to Queen Anne Street while the three sisters and Godfrey and Theta held a family conference at Bryanston Square. They were all in agreement that it would be intolerable for Hensleigh to continue to live in the same house with Ernest and Mary. With his increasing deafness and stubborn conviction of the rightness of his own opinions, he did not have an easy disposition in his old age. Nor was he one to suffer fools. He was annoyed by the weakness of Ernest's character and by the meanness and ignorance of Mary. In comparison with his three intellectual daughters, Mary was stupid, dull and small-minded. The three sisters were afraid that Mary's small-mindedness would result in, if not abuse, at least unkindness towards their father.

Thus, the consensus was to recommend to Hensleigh that he sell the house in Queen Anne Street and move into a house with Snow and her companion Marian Hughes; but as Effie shrewdly pointed out, it should be made to seem like his idea rather than something being forced upon him. In August of 1889 Effie went with her father to visit Emma at Down where, with Emma's help, the idea of changing houses seemed naturally to emerge. Four months later, Hensleigh, Snow, Marian and a staff of three moved to 94 Gower Street, a spacious house with light, well-proportioned rooms overlooking the gable of Irving Church which the family had attended half a century earlier.

"When the idea of keeping house with Snow dawned before me," Hensleigh wrote to Emma

> I regarded Marian as a necessary drawback that had to be swallowed, but I have quite changed my views. I now regard her as a great advantage, adding much to the cheerfulness of the house and making everything go smooth. She is extremely handy in making all arrangements, so that neither Snow nor I have the least trouble in housekeeping. And she is a very pleasant

> companion. She gets on very well with Mary Ernest, only makes her rather jealous when they compare the amount of their weekly bills.(28)

He then went on to tell his sister that he was settled comfortably and decidedly better off than he had been at Queen Anne Street. "I go out very little. I do not feel any the better for it when I do, not even more virtuous... so I sit by the fire and muse."(29)

Hensleigh and Snow were compatible in a way they never had been before. Encouraged by the success of The Moral Ideal, she began work on a second historical-religious volume which she titled The Message of Israel. Hensleigh took an interest in her philosophical pursuits, whereas she accepted his enthusiasm for spiritualism and encouraged his research and writing on telepathy, extra-sensory perception and what Jung would later call synchronicity. Snow's guardianship of her two young nephews Berry and Jem was less demanding now that they were at school at Rugby, where their grandfather had gone.

* * * * *

On 1 June 1891, two years after Fanny's death, Hensleigh died peacefully in his sleep at the age of eighty-seven. He was buried with his wife in the Mackintosh tomb under the yew tree at St. John's in Hampstead. An obituary of Hensleigh published in the Journal of the Society for Psychical Research noted that his outstanding intellectual achievements and fame had been over-shadowed by the eminence and celebrity of his cousin and brother-in-law, Charles Darwin, "but in moral nature he was not easily to be surpassed; - in the candid uprightness, the unobtrusive beneficence, the immutable spirit of honour, which made one feel as if all men were like him, how simple and noble the life of man might be."(30)

Godfrey was an executor of Hensleigh's will. Like his brother Frank, Hensleigh had made a number of shrewd investments and was worth

considerably more than any of his children had supposed. The estate was divided equally among the five children, the three exceptional daughters and the two disappointing sons. Alfred returned to London and became reconciled with his wife Margaret, but died of a heart attack a few months later, at the age of fifty, having conceived a third child who was born five months after his death. Ernest's wife also became pregnant and in July of 1893 gave birth to a son Allen.

After Hensleigh's death Snow and Marian went abroad for four months. Godfrey joined them for a few weeks while they were in Greece. Hope didn't enjoy travelling, so Godfrey usually took holidays alone or with the Farrers. Snow and Godfrey still enjoyed each other's company, as they had when they were children. Now that Godfrey was semi-retired from the Pottery, leaving his brother Laurence and young Cecil in charge, he had more time for pursuing other interests. Both he and Snow still enjoyed sketching and were competent watercolourists. After Greece, Snow went back to Italy, spending several weeks in Florence and Venice. From Venice she sent Herford a post card describing the charm and quaintness of the city. Of course, there is no mention of Browning, but surely she must have gone to see where he lived and where he died and where Elizabeth was buried.

When she returned to London, Snow was confronted with decisions to make regarding Berry and Jem. She had hoped to adopt them legally, but as their mother was still living and now there was a third child, Olive, Hope and Godfrey and Effie and Theta were opposed to this plan. Berry was now seventeen and felt it his duty to stay with his mother, who had received a substantial sum of money after Alfred's death, which he had inherited from his father. Despite Berry's decision to stay with his mother and the new baby Olive, most of his holidays were spent with Snow or with Hope and Godfrey in Staffordshire. And since Snow was now alone, apart from Marian, she decided to sell the house on Gower Street and move to 19 Lansdowne Road in Notting Hill.

* * * * *

The Message of Israel was published in 1894, when Snow was aged sixty-one. Though she considered it a "supplement" to The Moral Ideal, which concentrated as completely as possible the moral genius of the race of Israel, the intellectuals who had applauded The Moral Ideal found The Message of Israel nothing but a tedious historical interpretation of the Old Testament. Written in a different and more academic style, The Message of Israel was too theoretical for ordinary Christians, whether Broad Church, High Church or Evangelical. Those who purchased the book more than likely didn't finish it, and, if anyone benefitted from it, probably that person was a theologian. Two distinct groups of people were quite likely offended by it - Christian Fundamentalists, believing literally that the Scriptures are the word of God, and Anti-Semites. At the end of the nineteenth century there was a wave of Jewish immigrants into London from Eastern European countries, followed by the inevitable wave of anti-Semitism. In a time when religious, racial and class prejudices were accepted as the normal and right way of thinking, Snow was astonishingly free of them. She admires Judaism and in contrasting it with Christianity, she lumps Protestants and Catholics together as one faith.

What was, or is, the message of Israel expressed in this book? Snow writes: "The lesson of Judaism answers the perennial aspiration of the human race. The belief in a growing revelation which lies at the root of the message of the Jew embodies the mature yearning of humanity."(31)

And what does she consider the perennial aspiration of the human race? The merging of the human with the divine. A quarter of a century earlier she had written to Browning: "The struggle and misery of life is that we cannot believe humanity is Divine. This is the truth we need to live, and we cannot reach it, because love and honour almost never run in one channel."(32)

And how does she merge Judaism into the Christianity she herself so strongly believes?

> Judaism begins with the idea of a remnant; but the remnant was to be a seed. The experience of crushing calamity revealed to the great minds of the race that to be a glorious nation was by no means the destiny divinely planned for Israel. In that shattering revelation the faith of many perished, or was transformed into a narrow and exclusive fanaticism, but for some it expanded and deepened into that spirit of profound trust, at once catholic and individual, which we know in the Psalms. In them we have the blossom and the fruit of Judaism, in them the seed of Christianity... For the remnant, though it seem a narrower conception than a united Israel, is in truth an infinitely wider one. It begins with a selection, but expands to include the world. It reveals the true Israel as present whenever the human spirit recognises a divine at its root, and discovers its separation from that root in all that sets up separation from anything but evil.(33)

Snow considered Judaism as the necessary foundation of Christianity, but, by not accepting Christ as the Messiah, it was not as advanced as, for example, English law which is much more advanced than the ancient Roman law from which it evolved. Not only was The Message of Israel largely unread in its day but copies have been passed down in the Wedgwood family for several generations with the pages still uncut.

* * * * *

Emily Gurney died in 1895 after a lengthy illness, and her niece returned Snow's letters to her. Emily had wanted their correspondence published. Snow did not, although she granted permission to Emily's niece to print some of her letters in a book titled The Letters of Emily Gurney, which was published privately. Snow decided to look back over their correspondence, which spanned thirty years, and edit her own letters. She burned many, cut out paragraphs from others and pasted them together in four loosely bound scrapbooks. To these she wrote in the purple ink of which she was so fond an extraordinary two-page preface titled "To my sisters of the flesh and spirit."

> ... In reading what I have written after the interval of a generation I am penetrated afresh by the wonderful love which was not alienated by confidences as monstrous and depressing as many which I have committed to the flames, as some which I have set apart for possible perusal for a sympathetic reader warned of their contents... the autobiographical records which I here bequeath are a confidence or nothing. A page or two may interest an external reader, but the eyes which follow when mine are closed forever, what I wrote long years ago must be opened by sympathy. I believe myself to discover in these outpourings, amid much I regret, something more than my own words, something which I cannot bring myself to put out of the possibility of transmission to another mind. I think that the voice which speaks to me, may perhaps speak to others.(34)

It is tempting to place too much importance on that enigmatic preface, but it seems most likely that what she had in mind was a religious experience following a "dark night of the soul" which might be of comfort to those who as yet had heard no "voice."

* * * * *

Despite the lack of interest in The Message of Israel, Snow continued writing essays, both biographical and philosophical. She had lost none of her youthful energy, though few of her generation were still so enthusiastic about debating moral and theological issues. Most were like Godfrey who many years ago had told her "the seeking for God is too arduous a search for one who has the every day work of life to do."(35) Ernest Hensleigh died in August of 1898, at the age of sixty-one, after a long struggle with cancer. Godfrey, too, had been unwell for a long while, and a month after Ernest's death, he had his right leg amputated just below the knee. Like his great-grandfather Josiah, he was fitted with a wooden leg. The following year Theta died peacefully in his sleep at the age of eighty-one. Shortly afterwards Effie left Abinger Hall to her step-son Tom and moved to Idlerocks to live with Hope and Godfrey and Mary. Cecil and Lucie now had two little

girls, Phoebe born in 1893 and Audrey born in 1894. Snow enjoyed visiting Staffordshire more now than at any other time since her childhood. On one occasion, shortly after she had written a biographical sketch of Ruskin for the Contemporary Review, which was later published in a single pamphlet, Snow decided to take on the immense task of sorting through family letters and putting together a scrapbook for her niece Mary. Godfrey had bought at auction a collection of letters from their great-grandfather Josiah to his partner Thomas Bentley. There were other members of the family besides Snow, Effie and Hope, who had preserved letters, including their Mackintosh grandfather whose letters their mother had kept.

Snow spent an entire summer sorting through the letters and compiling the first volume of the Scrapbook, which begins with the dedication:

> My dearest Child,
>
> The collection which I here offer you is one of heterogeneous interest. It contains all letters in my possession which throw light upon the experience or character of those persons, among our friends or kindred, who have left an appreciable trace on our lives, or the life of the world. The gathering thus made covers a space of more than a century, starting with a letter from your great great grandfather, and closing with some which may revive your own earliest recollections. I have added notes from my recollections or reading, and have appended some portraits or other illustrations. I have had much pleasure, mixed with some sadness, in arranging the volume for you, & I like to think that you may one day read it with some share in the former feeling, and only that faint tinge of the latter which I can hardly desire to be absent from the perusal of records touching on the hopes, disappointments and regrets, of those who have passed away.
>
> Even at the distant date when you will fully understand these words, I shall remain
> my dearest child
> your loving aunt
>
> Frances Julia Wedgwood.(36)

With advancing years, Snow seemed to have softened, and, as inevitably happens in families, a few became closer, while others seemed

to fade out of their lives entirely. On 5 February, 1904, Godfrey wrote to Snow:

> My dear Snow,
>
> I received in due course long, long ago - a very charming letter from you on the advantage of attaining 71 years of age: one of which I reckon is that one may disregard ones moral obligations, i.e. not answer a kind birthday letter until the corresponding birthday comes round, and I can wish you a happy birthday with all that health and friends can bring to it. Don't try to weigh our respective uses of the 71 years since we created a family sensation by being born. You have a work to show in yr writings that will live after you. You have the triumph of that great disability of which I have had recent experience myself (tho getting better, thank God). When I think of you, I am full of wonder at what you have accomplished & what you have made of life.
>
> All good wishes for your 71st birthday
> Your affect. 72nder
> Godfrey Wedgwood(37)

A year later Godfrey died of heart disease and was buried near Idlerocks in the churchyard at Moddershall. On his tombstone are the words "... with thankfulness for the example of a character shining with the light of unselfish love... 'Neither shall there be any more pain.' Rev. XXI"(38)

Chapter 11

De Senectute (1905-1913)

> "There could hardly be a worse preparation for the self-sacrifices which are actually demanded from the old than the theory that old age makes sacrifice easy."
>
> Julia Wedgwood
> Nineteenth Century Essays

Godfrey's death touched Snow more deeply than any death in the family since Mack's, more than forty years earlier. She had never found real sympathy with Ernest or Alfred or, apart from Claude Erskine in her youth, with any of her male cousins other than Godfrey. With him the shared experiences of a life-time had dispelled the disparities of their characters rather than emphasising them. Possibly also Godfrey's death signalled that her own life was drawing to a close. In her essay "De Senectute" she wrote:

> That dim sight, dull hearing, weakened powers of locomotion, and failing memory are evils, all must allow; nay, we must concede that long before we receive such telling notice that our mansion here is getting out of repair, and must be shortly abandoned, we have parted with some of the attractiveness and interest of life. We have lost its store of infinite possibility. (1)

This was precisely what the indomitable Effie was beginning to fear was happening to her sister when Snow stayed at Idlerocks for several weeks after Godfrey's funeral. Inevitably the conversation was of the family and, as the closure of the Pottery, because of persistent financial losses, seemed more likely than ever now, Effie once again brought up the subject of Snow's writing a new biography of their great-grandfather. Effie herself had arranged, catalogued and edited Josiah Wedgwood's letters to his partner Thomas Bentley, which were privately published in 1903, and she was now in the process of organizing and

editing Wedgwood's other correspondence for private publication. The organization of the correspondence obviously would be of enormous assistance to any future biographer. Effie, the eternal pragmatist, knew that she had a talent for organization, but not for writing, as Snow had.

Cecil and Lucie approved of Snow's writing the book, and other Staffordshire cousins also encouraged her to undertake the task. From the family's point of view the biographies of Llewellynn Jewitt, Eliza Meteyard and Samuel Smiles were inadequate and frequently inaccurate. Before all the Wedgwoods and Darwins, who themselves had spent portions of their childhood at Etruria Hall listening to stories about their forebears, were gone, a new biography ought to be written - a biography more skillfully and truthfully written and a biography that would correct the mistakes of previous biographers. "Certainly Eliza Meteyard's is a valuable work & it is quoted on other subjects by quite respected historians, but it is not a book which could satisfy any one to leave as the memorial of an ancestor who could hope to replace it by or rather to append to it the most modest contribution to literature. It is tasteless and gushing."(2)

Snow finally agreed to write a new biography after she had completed a revised edition of The Moral Ideal with the addition of a chapter on Egypt, which had been requested by her publishers. She had always written slowly, but her work was now hardly progressing at all. The Egyptian research, which demanded hours at the London Library and the British Museum, was tiring, to say nothing of the awesome prospect of beginning another book, and she began to feel herself incapable of this task. Marian Hughes had made life as easy as possible for her, but Marian was a housekeeper, not an intellectual companion. Probably, too, Snow was drinking more brandy than was conducive to thorough research or to fluent writing. In December of 1905 Herford came to London and offered

her his assistance, but he was busy with his own writing and teaching and was concerned about his wife's poor health. At his insistence, however, she acquired a secretary.

Now aiding her with research and copying the words she first drafted and then corrected, just as she had done fifty years earlier for Elizabeth Gaskell, was another family friend and successful young writer, Edward Morgan Forster. The grandson of Snow's friend Laura Thornton Forster, he was then twenty-six years of age, had written one novel, Where Angels Fear To Tread, published in 1905, and was at a frustrating standstill with his second novel The Longest Journey.

Forster's aunt Laura Forster advised him to cultivate Snow whom she described as "A Saint in the Dark." The phrase is perceptive and hauntingly appropriate. Evangelicals and, in particular, members of the Clapham Sect frequently used the word "Saint" for anyone who displayed the Christian virtues, especially of forebearance and self-sacrifice. Darkness, with reference to Snow, could hardly mean lack of ability to comprehend; more likely Laura Forster meant the kind of religious doubt which Snow had confided to Maurice fifty years earlier, when she wrote: "I cannot believe in the existence of a Heavenly Father in the way I believe in the existence of my own father." Yet, in spite of doubts, Snow possessed a kind of mystical awareness which softened the determined rationality, and she continued to search and to behave as if she believed implicitly.

Forster agreed to pause in his own work to assist Snow, whom he fondly described as "an intellectual heavyweight." The association was a success, for both the new edition of The Moral Ideal and The Longest Journey appeared the following year. Snow did not eliminate or change the dedication to Browning of the earlier editions, but she appended a two paragraph notice to the revised edition which "owes more than I can say to two who have put aside their own work to help mine - Edward Morgan Forster and Charles Harold Herford."

Probably Snow listened indulgently not only to Forster's literary troubles but also to his agnosticism and to his convictions of the importance of personal feelings over social conventions. Undoubtedly she had no idea that he was homosexual, for she advised him to be more explicit in writing of his character's infidelities and to fall in love before he wrote another novel. In her old age she had mellowed. With her, as with many of the best minds of her generation, religious belief was more a habit than a certainty, though not a habit to be discarded. For his part, E.M. Forster was the sort of delicate young man who was more at ease with elderly cerebral women than with healthy, worldly women of his own age. Years later he wrote of Snow: "She was an old lady then and most pleasant to devil for. Indeed most of that group matured when they had passed middle age."(3)

What he meant by "matured" is open to conjecture. If he meant discarding the prudery and hypocrisy of ignoring the disagreeable facts of life in exchange for accepting the reality that all things are not bright and beautiful, then unquestionably he was right. While as early as 1848 in Vanity Fair Thackeray had satirized the hypocrisy of emphasising the appearance of virtue rather than virtue itself, the clever, well bred young ladies who were brought up in the prosperous, Evangelical atmosphere of the Clapham Sect were slow to assimilate it into their own lives. Dickens later made the same criticism in his characterisation of Mrs General in Little Dorrit, published in 1857: "Even her propriety could not dispute that there was impropriety in the world; but Mrs. General's way of getting rid of it was to put it out of sight, and make believe there was no such thing."(4)

In her youth and middle years, Snow had exalted pure romantic love and spiritual union, suppressing sexuality and, with less success, religious doubts. In her old age, though she still clung to some of the old attitudes, like old friends, what rancoured most was hypocrisy. She despised the deliberate evasion of truth, the deliberate ignoring of

whatever was unpleasant and pretending that it did not exist, which then led to the insincerity of insisting that the happy view of things was the real truth. The pursuit of truth had always been her ruling passion.

Late in the spring of 1908 Snow renewed a correspondence with Alfred William Benn, a classical scholar of English birth and education who had set up permanent residence with his family in Italy. Though Snow and Benn had never met personally, he had favourably reviewed The Message of Israel some fifteen years earlier and admired the new edition of The Moral Ideal. He had also praised a biography of Francis Newman, written under a pseudonym, which had annoyed Snow. She wrote to him that she disliked the biography because of its critical treatment of Newman as a man and that she disapproved of biographers hiding behind pseudonyms, particularly when they were being uncomplimentary to their subjects. Remembering Newman as a conscientious teacher to herself and a faithful friend to her father, Snow admired Newman as a man, but thought him less important as a theologian than Benn did. She shared Forster's scorn of Newman's dictum to rise up in the morning with the purpose that the day shall not pass without its self-denial - "Make some sacrifice, do some distasteful thing, which you are not actually obliged to do."(5)

But Snow and Benn's philosophical disagreements mattered little in comparison with the intellectual stimulus they offered one another. Both were isolated, Benn because he lived abroad and Snow because of age and failing health. Benn, ten years younger, sent her a copy of his book Revaluations, and she wrote that she was most impressed with his article on Nietzsche: "It is always pleasant to find oneself less in antagonism to a thinker than one fancied... My scholarship is so shallow and partial that in the face of the real thing I am always

more than anxious to learn than to argue."[6]

In Benn Snow found someone sympathetic and knowledgeable with whom to discuss her own writing. The biography of her great-grandfather Josiah Wedgwood was progressing very slowly. "It is a formidable undertaking for anyone within 3 years of fourscore, & I tremble that I may never finish it. There are several lives of him & Miss Meteyard's is a mine of information, but none are satisfactory to us (my sisters & me) & I am not without hope that I may bring out a charming character, full of playfulness, affection & energy. But it is quite in a different line from anything I have tried before, & it is late in the day to take up a new line."[7]

Snow recognized that biography had changed considerably as a literary form in the more than half a century that had elapsed since the publication of Meteyard's biography of Wedgwood, as well as her own biography of Wesley. The aim of the early twentieth century biographer was no longer to eulogize or to assure the reader of the "certainty of something better," but to give an insight into human nature. "What we care to know of men and women is not so much their special tastes, biases, gifts, humours, as the general depth and mass of human nature that is in them."[8] She was not entirely in sympathy with that view, which had been the view of her old friend and mentor Richard Holt Hutton. In an earlier essay which she had written for the Spectator, when Hutton was its editor, she stated: "The truth is, that what is needed for a Biography is not so much exceptional power or exceptional beauty, as exceptional illumination."[9]

The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood is the most difficult of all Snow's books to evaluate, for it is impossible to know how much she herself wrote and how much was written, revised or heavily edited by Herford. It was published by Macmillan in 1915, two years after her death. On the title page is the information that it was "revised and

edited, with an introduction and a prefatory memoir of the author by C.H. Herford." And in the Preface Herford notes:

> Before Miss Wedgwood's death in November 1913 the book had made substantial advances towards completeness. But failing health, without actually interrupting her work, had latterly impaired her power of working effectually; and notwithstanding the aid of an unusually able and devoted secretary, Mrs Edith Slater, in providing and sifting the material, the literary form, both in arrangement and expression, fell far short of the high ideal of intellectual clarity, coherence and power which had animated the writing of her prime....No attempt has been, or could be, made to distinguish between the Editor's work and hers in detail. But some chapters, especially II and VII have been reconstructed and some pages rewritten, and probably not more than a third of the sentences remain exactly as they stood. (10)

If this is so, the book is as much Herford's creation as Snow's, though it is also possible to suppose that Herford may have claimed more credit than actually belonged to him. The two other sections of the book written entirely by Herford, the Memoir and the Introduction, pose additional unanswerable questions. In the Memoir Herford writes: "Miss Wedgwood retained her vigour without serious abatement until within a few months of her end."(11) This statement rather contradicts what he wrote about her "failing health" in the Preface.

Herford's Introduction presents an even more inconsistent picture, for his judgment of Josiah Wedgwood seems not at all what one supposes Snow's would have been. Herford writes:

> Josiah Wedgwood confessedly occupies a niche of no little distinction in the crowded temple of eighteenth-century invention and industrial art. Yet he was no prodigy of rare and astonishing genius, no Bernard Pallisy or Benvenuto Cellini, performing miracles with the scantiest means; but simply the greatest of a race of master potters who for four generations had "thrown" and moulded on the Burslem heights, and not greatly superior to contemporaries, like Turner, whose fame has been all but obliterated by his own. Outside pottery he was simply a very shrewd and energetic Georgian Englishman.(12)

If Snow had considered her great-grandfather merely a "shrewd and energetic Georgian Englishman" of no particular importance "outside pottery" she certainly would not have undertaken the formidable task of writing his biography. Nor would she have approved of the sentence that "he has, in a rare degree, the added importance which the founder of a family derives from the distinction and achievements of his descendants."(13) And most certainly she would have used her purple ink to delete Herford's sentence: "If Wedgwood must be compared with any poet, we should think rather of Cowper, a no less genuine Englishman, who stood, in verse and prose, like him, for a fastidious simplicity and a cheerful uninebriating joy."(14) Surely Snow would have thought it absurd that Wedgwood must be compared with any poet.

Still, in spite of the uncertainties and contradictions, The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood is a considerable improvement over the earlier pretentious and inaccurate biographies by Meteyard, Jewitt and Smiles. By confining the material to events in Wedgwood's life - rather than digressing to regional history or to lengthy explanations about the processes of making pottery, as Meteyard does, The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood has a unity of construction and story line. The style of writing is clear, vigorous and straightforward, eliminating the gushing, adjective-laden prose Snow and her sisters had found so offensive in the earlier biographies.

For example, Meteyard summarises Wedgwood's move from Burslem:

> As though with some foreshadowing of the place his name would occupy on the sacred list of illustrious Englishmen, and of the admiration which, growing with time, would at length give something like an antique sacredness to his exquisite works, Mr Wedgwood resolved, in conjunction with his partner and friend, to hand down to posterity, through the means of their art, the memory of this first day's labour at Etruria. Its fruit should show future generations that it was not by the hands of others, but through the dignity of their own, that this hitherto sterile spot of moorland was dedicated to its new purpose of

> educating communities through the arts which refine, and the utilities which civilise and purify.(15)

The same event is described in The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood;

> The change from Burslem to Etruria was indeed an era in the life of Wedgwood. It marked not only an achieved success, but a transformed occupation, lifting him from the world of the arts to the world of Art, and giving him for the rest of his life work which was as much his delight as his business. It also raised him to a new social status, and introduced him to what, compared with his previous manner of living, may be called luxury.(16)

When she writes in the first person about her own childhood memories of the nursery, the drawing room and the gardens at Etruria Hall and her recollections of her great Aunt Sarah Wedgwood, there is an immediacy and charm without any of the smugness that so often accompanies biographies written by family members. Nearly three quarters of a century later The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood is still enjoyable reading and, because of the thoroughness of the research, is of considerable benefit to present-day Wedgwood scholars. One can therefore conclude that, however much was written by Snow or by Herford, she succeeded in leaving a more satisfying memorial to her ancestor than had been achieved in the nineteenth century.

* * * * *

In the summer of 1909 Benn returned to England to consult with doctors about a recurring illness. Since he and Snow had begun a regular correspondence, he asked if he might call on her. She agreed, but the prospect made her nervous, for she wrote: "I fear I ought to warn you that I am very deaf but I always use a good trumpet, & my friends find our intercourse practicable, even the few who are my seniors - which I mention in the hope that ill health may not make my infirmity seem to you too great a difficulty."(17)

The meeting apparently went well, for they began to correspond with even greater frequency and enthusiasm. They recommended books to

each other and discussed the current state of literature and the relative merits of Dickens, Carlyle, Trollope, George Eliot, Mrs Gaskell, Sir Walter Scott, Tennyson, Thomas Macaulay, Harriet Martineau, Matthew Arnold, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett and John Stuart Mill. Knowing or having known so many of them personally added a certain poignancy to many of Snow's comments: "I hear so many voices that none now can hear but me... A man must be judged by what he does best. Though a person who has spent 77 years in the world is not likely to underrate the importance of the eleventh hour."(18)

Possibly with the eleventh hour in view, Benn encouraged her to look back upon the famous men and women she had known and to record her impressions. Possibly he might even have thought of her as a subject for a biography, because he was especially interested in her views on politics and Feminism. She told him that because she was "an old Tory who finds the political horizon black everywhere" she was no longer a "Female Suffragist."

A political Radical himself, Benn was disappointed. Snow attempted to justify her lack of political activism as being quite separate from an interest in the relationship between the sexes:

> I suppose the real difference between you - & many near and dear to me - & myself, is that you look upon political truth as sharing the character of scientific truth, so that for instance a political controversy may be paralleled with that concerning the undulatory or emission theories of light, where the one who is right now, was always right. I, on the other hand, regard politics as rather analagous to such a subject as agriculture, where time is an important factor, & what was right in May is wrong in October. Indeed, the very name of Politics seems to me to testify this, for surely <u>policy</u> changes with circumstances. I know, however, that policy is one of those words where the adjective has a wider scope than the noun.(19)

As to the relationship between the sexes, she told him: "I can

never fix upon any moral characteristic belonging more to one sex than to another... I think J.S. Mill was strangely ignorant of women. What he says of the subservience of women to men lasting only because men like it seems to me to need two letters before men in the last clause to put it right."(20)

Though Benn was a professed Feminist, he replied that he believed that women had simpler characters than men. To this belief Snow took strong exception, arguing that it was not their characters that were simpler but their lives. Benn was not convinced, and Snow elaborated: "The love of woman to man is always her deepest interest whether the man be lover, husband, brother, father or only friend. This is what I meant by the superior simplicity of woman's life, for one could not put the correlate true of men."(21)

Benn suggested that the greatest women (meaning "gifted, complex, intellectual" women) were more masculine than feminine in character. To this Snow replied: "I should not say that the greatest woman I have known, George Eliot, had the most of a man in her."(22) Apparently neither could sway the other, so they went on to literary topics, agreeing to exchange lists of their favourite authors. Snow wrote to him:

> Thank you for your list of novels. I think nothing tells one more about a person than the novels they care for. We have a good many common friends but not all. Henry James is a deadly enemy. Marcelle Tinagre a perfect stranger. But after your introduction she shall not remain so. H.G. Wells I both hate and read. Why should one cultivate the society of a foe?
>
> I think you are hard on our novelists. It is true we have no longer any genius on the field of fiction (nor indeed anywhere else as far as I can see) but I think the rank & file are better than they were in my youth. People write novels now who would then have written some thing more ambitious.(23)

The year 1910 included two events of national importance, the death of King Edward VII and the Jubilee celebration of the centennial

of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell, where Snow's feelings were in opposition to the general response throughout the country. When Marian expressed her sorrow over the death of the King, Snow told her it was a misuse of the word, to which Marian objected, stating that sorrow was what she really felt for a day or two. Snow asked her why she could not think of the King just as well in Heaven as in Buckingham Palace, since she had a much better chance of meeting him in the former place. Marian replied: "Yes, I know the feeling was unreasonable but it was real." And Snow concluded that there was a "mystical kinship" which might be exercised by all as a national virtue, though "the opposite, at all events, is a vice which all do."

Concerning the centennial of the birth of Elizabeth Gaskell (29 September 1810) Snow wrote to Benn:

> All this autumn I have been wondering at the enduring fame of a dear friend of my youth - Mrs Gaskell. Or, perhaps I ought to say a kind friend of my youth, for I don't suppose there was anything mutual in my affection for her, but I tenderly remember her goodness to me. Less than with most however does that feeling affect my estimate of any one & her novels never had a power for me, so that this "jubilee" surprises me... I only mentioned it to show what must be the fallacy of my criticism of Mrs Gaskell. I have come upon other evidence of her fame to which I could apply much harsher criticism - strange wishes to write & lecture about one who had forbidden any posthumous notice, a wish of course scrupulously observed by her daughters but apparently regarded by others (& not only would-be scribblers) as a sort of modest formula, which it is a piece of good breeding to disregard.
>
> I have been considering what must have been the incidence of that wish in the 4 very different Victorian authors who have expressed it - Thackeray, M. Arnold, R.H. Hutton and Eliz Gaskell. You could not choose any 2 who were not dissimilar, & the wish I think is not very common. I find the common element elusive. Thackeray's feeling is comprehensible but the others puzzle me.
>
> Mr Hutton said so sadly when he was dying & something was said about Matthew Arnold's

> letters: "Ah, that is what people do when a man wishes for no biography; they publish his letters." He was secured from that calamity partly by his detestable handwriting - & his letters were so like his articles that there was no temptation.(24)

There is an irony which would have amused Snow had she been able to foresee that E.M. Forster would later describe her own style of writing for the Spectator as virtually indistinguishable from that of its editor and her close friend R.H. Hutton.

* * * * *

In the late autumn of 1910 Snow felt tired with vague symptoms of nausea, depression and restlessness. While she forced herself to continue with her writing, rising at 5 a.m. each morning to work for two hours, she found she was making little progress, so she decided to spend the month of December at Idlerocks with her sisters. The change did her little good other than "providing me with the delightful and welcome society of my two dear sisters," and she complained of feeling the cold more in Staffordshire than in London. Brandy, of course, was the best way to counteract a chill.

When she returned to London, she discovered a tumour in her breast and went in to hospital in mid-January. The following month she wrote to Benn to explain that the five-week delay in answering his letter "was caused by an operation (the removal of a cancer) which has left me very weak & still quite an invalid, incapable of answering letters but not of desiring them."(25)

Effie came to be with her during her stay in hospital and remained for another three weeks while she was convalescing at home on Lansdowne Road. Hope and Mary also came to London for a week, as did Herford. Her recovery was slower than she expected; she coughed a lot and had difficulty in talking, which she hadn't anticipated. Still, she maintained good spirits and was grateful for the kind attentions of the loyal Marian, of Effie and of Henrietta Litchfield, who temporarily put aside her own ailments to nurse her cousin.

As soon as she was fit enough, Snow returned to her routine of writing every morning and of holding open house on Sunday afternoons, but conversation became more difficult with the two handicaps of deafness and constrictions of the throat. The strain of composition and of serious study fatigued her. Writing personal letters and reading fiction took on an even greater importance in her life. Other than her two sisters and her niece Mary, Herford and Benn were her two most faithful correspondents. Possibly because Herford had become like a favourite nephew, visiting her two or three times a year and sharing with her his family worries as well as scholarly interests, her letters to Benn reveal more of her literary concerns. To Benn she wrote:

> Do you know Charles Lamb's essay on convalescence? It says almost all there is to be said about the matter. At any rate I think it expresses all that I have been feeling in the long nights since I received your welcome letter... I shd be ashamed to have it known to what depths I have sunk in point of literature. Almost no novel has been too trashy for me. I do think in comparing my daily food with that I shd have had to live upon in my youth that we have a much larger & more various amount of <u>thought</u> in the fiction of the day now than then, but it has taken a line very remote from my sympathies, & I am as much restricted in my choice as if good taste were the arbiter, which it is not. However, it is a marvel to think how many contemporaries have been employed in writing what I can read, seeing that a novel barely lasts me a night."(26)

Benn suggested that she read about the Clapham Sect, calling attention to the fact that he himself was reading her Uncle Robert Mackintosh's <u>Life</u> of her grandfather Sir James Mackintosh. He also suggested that she read Wilberforce's <u>Journal</u> and his major work <u>A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes of This Country Contrasted With Real Christians</u>. While these may not at first appear to be light or delightful reading, Snow wrote to Benn that Wilberforce:

> ... led me to a delightful mention of my

> Ancestor which I have never seen. He speaks of his (Wedgwood's) "spirited & manly" family, retouching the dim memories of my childhood when the youths of Etruria were feeble old men, & I was privileged to the dignity of sitting up late & taking a hand at the card table. What a charm there is in that retouching of faint recollections! Or rather (for that is an unsuitable expression) transfiguring them with another light. It gives me a sense of the reality of History which makes one feel that one has only just realized it with a part of one's mind. I feel nearer to Julius Caesar, nay to Pericles & Plato, for that mention of my Grandfather by Wilberforce. Three score years and ten brings me back to that enchanting card table, an equivalent leap to Etruria with its honoured guest, & I am ready to continue the process. (27)

Wilberforce had visited Josiah Wedgwood at his home, Etruria Hall, for three days in November of 1791, and Snow was able to incorporate Wilberforce's description of this visit into her own biography of Wedgwood. Her writing was progressing satisfactorily once again, and she felt confident enough to spend Whitsuntide in Staffordshire with her sisters. Like their father before them, both Effie and Hope were seriously involved in psychical research, a subject which Snow found uncomfortable but was too fair-minded to dismiss completely. When pressed to participate in one of their seances, she observed that as she was deaf to voices in this world she could hardly be expected to hear voices from another. Instead, while her sisters attempted communication with the spirit world to discover what lay in the future, Snow looked backwards to understand what <u>had</u> happened to compare with the concrete reality of what <u>was</u> happening. If she did escape from the world of reality now, it was only in the realm of fiction, and even the imagination itself was subject to critical comparison.

> What we generally want in fiction is some kind of talk about the things of the day. That in itself is rather a new attitude in the novel writer. Miss Austen does not give you any notion what people were thinking about 100 years ago. Now you cannot take up any story without some sort

> of background of the problems of the hour. "Emma" transposed to the key of our day wd bring us echoes of Regency politics & one has not a notion what her politics were. The change has made fiction more interesting & more tiresome.(28)

Benn pressed her even more urgently for her views on particular literary figures and to send him a list of what she had been reading. She replied: "You ask after the least bad of the Novels I have been reading. Galsworthy's Patrician might be recommended in more positive terms. I think it most interesting & I am not biased by any moral sympathy with the Author."(29)

About particular authors whose works Benn wished her to comment upon she answered: "I think Anthony Trollope must be a man's writer; the book of his I like best is his life of Cicero, which I feel very sympathetic & just critical enough. Of his novels I only recall an impression of what has always seemed to me a very true picture of the worldliness of the average man - a delineation much truer than Thackeray's, it seems to me, & very much on the same lines."(30) She did not admire the work of Arnold Bennett, though she wished that she could because so much of his work had the setting of the Five Towns (the Potteries) of which she has had "for the past seventy years the most tender recollections."

Benn was writing on Milton, whom he thought the greatest of English poets. Snow commented: "What one feels a want of in Milton is his appreciation of true womanhood - Eve being sent away like the ladies from a modern dining table that Adam & the Angel may talk more freely, & Delilah being a type of the Temptress... "(31) Their old disagreement of the character of masculinity and femininity was revived with the same topsy-turvy position of Benn, the Feminist, defending the male chauvinist view. He thought that Harriet Martineau's great intellectual (meaning masculine) powers made her egotistical and pitiable. Snow answered:

> I think that Harriet Martineau was the least to be pitied (at least if satisfaction excludes pity) of any woman I ever knew. She was the most satisfied of women. But she was very kind to me 64 years ago & loved my Mother, & she had much ground for satisfaction, though much was hollow. I think the sense of failure was unknown to her, & in friendship her only anxiety was that (in a man) the feeling shd not develop into anything warmer, an anxiety sometimes ludicrously superfluous.(32)

Having assured Snow that he believed her (Snow) to be one of the most brilliant women of the Victorian Age, Benn tactlessly persisted with the idea that brilliant women were inevitably egotistical and miserable because their brains were unnatural to their sex. He then cited examples of brilliant men whom he believed to be more modest and satisfied than ordinary men. Snow replied:

> I am amazed at what you say of Carlyle, Dickens, Tennyson & Ruskin... Tennyson had a morbid <u>sense of self</u> - I remember his saying to my Mother when she took up a book from the table at the London Library "Oh, you want to see what I have been reading" & to a friend with whom he was staying - "Can your parlour maid be trusted not to repeat anything I say at table" - & a number of such things - which if they are not vanity exactly may take that aspect, but for the other men I cannot conceive what you mean... I think genius is hardly ever modest. Walter Scott's modesty is something unique... (33)

Snow was certain that she herself possessed no real genius. Had the external circumstances of her life - the landscape surrounding the pilgrimage - been different, her achievements would have been no greater than they were. But she was not falsely modest. She acknowledged that her mind was superior to the minds of most women - and men - of her generation, just as she acknowledged her disabilities.

> Deafness is a narrowing influence. This is not an unmixed evil, for whatever narrows shd concentrate. But I fear the dangers of all disabilities are more often illustrated than their advantages... I am greatly relieved at the Coronation being passed. I cannot help always being anxious about a crowd. And several of my dear ones were among it, a

> sister in the Abbey for 7 hours! She says the oppression of airlessness was great. I wonder nobody fainted - 7000 people in that unventilated space for so long. I was interested in hearing from her experience on the following day that the person to whom the warmest welcome, after the King's, was given was Sir Wilfred Laurier (34). Interested & rather ashamed for I ought to know as much of our public men as the average member of the London crowd, & I shd not have particularly distinguished him.(35)

* * * * *

In 1912 Snow wrote less often to her sisters and to other members of the family, though probably she saw them more often. Her letters to Benn are also less numerous in 1912 (though, of course, some may have been lost or Benn failed to answer as promptly as usual) but the only sign of ageing or failing health was a tendency to repeat the same anecdote, though this in itself is hardly significant; yet, almost casually in the middle of a letter to Benn dated 5 May 1912, she inserts the sentence: "I have had a slight renewal of the fears of last year, & have been again in the surgeon's hands, so that I am still a prisoner, but I am thankful to say not to the exclusion of all power of work."(36) Her dedication to her work and her enjoyment of it seemed, if anything, to increase.

> My ancestor has lost none of his interest & charm for me but the powers needed to ascertain dates & hunt up references are woefully shrunken. I am thankful to come upon a testimony from one of his sons - Coleridge's patron & my grandfather - "of all the men known to me he was the most free from the flaws of human nature." (I can't quote quite exactly) I feel the tribute the more as their actual intercourse was not entirely congenial. My grandfather being a refined & somewhat fastidious <u>gentleman</u>, & the relation bringing out the <u>jolt</u> of social divergence, something like an unexpected stop in a passage. My sympathies all go with the plain straight forward father who never I think perceived the cause of a certain coldness that he must have felt. How thankful one is at times for ignorance!(37)

She spent the month of December 1912 in Staffordshire with her sisters. She also stayed a week with Cecil and Lucie and their daughters Phoebe and Audrey, now aged sixteen and fifteen, at the Woodhouse. Recently Cecil had had more success with the business. While barely profitable, the Wedgwood factory was no longer operating at a loss. Believing that the Pottery and the family tradition were not to be discarded lightly, Snow set up a trust fund for Cecil, securing his promise that, if at all possible, Wedgwood should be carried on as a family business, even if occasional losses were incurred. Possibly she perceived the first hostile rumblings that preceded the outbreak of World War I, or possibly in researching and writing the biography of her great-grandfather she had become more sensitive to the preservation of a family heritage.

In the spring of 1913 she experienced a renewed energy, both physically and mentally. On 8 March she wrote to Benn:

> In many ways I enjoy my age so much more than I did my youth, but there is some drawback in the far larger place experience leads one to give to the trials of illness so that the concern it occasions fills so much more of one's mind than it did. I do not feel this with the sorrow of life, at least not with all. My mind has been full of illness (not my body at all); two of the people I love best have been seriously ill. When one has passed one's eightieth birthday the thought of bereavement loses all its sharpness but illness has gained in oppressiveness what the other has lost, & I have been greatly cast down in this interval - & yet neither case has been very suffering. (38) My sister Hope is making an excellent recovery. "It is a disappointment," she writes. I know she had hoped to join her husband. The world wd be very empty to me if she had her wish. "Heaven won't be much of a change to them," a former Cook said when she watched them walking in the garden. It is a comfort to think how common that happiness is - I am afraid one must add among the well-to-do. I don't see why it shd be a class characteristic but I think it is.(39)

Only someone who never in her life had to worry about having

enough money to satisfy her material needs could suppose that happiness, marital or otherwise, had no relation to income. Only someone brought up in the Victorian Age, so deeply influenced by industrialization and Evangelicalism, could suppose particular emotions distinctive within the class structure. It all seems strange in one so intelligent and so analytical, yet attitudes are often affected by elements in the environment which seem to have no personal connection with them at all. However advanced or out of step Snow may have seemed to her more ordinary contemporaries, to later generations her uncertainties, anxieties, pretensions, prejudices and infuriating contradictions make her seem the most Victorian of Victorians. Quite literally, of course, this was true. With the exception of the first four years of her childhood, her life coincided with the sixty-four year reign of Queen Victoria and then allowed her a dozen years to look back and reflect upon the Age, as well as upon her own life.

In 1909, at the request of an acquaintance, Dr. Robertson Nicoll,(40) she had collected twenty-six of her essays written during the previous thirty years, mainly published in the Contemporary Review or in the Spectator, which represented her "convictions illustrated by varying circumstances and experiences, but themselves unchanged except so far as time has deepened and expanded them... They ought to afford a picture of that movement by which the English mind has passed in all ultimate convictions from an attitude of contented or indifferent acquiescence to one of denial, and then again through a stage of doubt to a readiness to receive new truths allied with that which has been rejected... The series illustrates, even by its mistakes, those aspects of truth which in their succession and inheritance make up what we know as the spiritual side of the doctrine of Evolution."(41)

"The close of the nineteenth century is a time when influence and fame are, to a peculiar extent, the lot of the aged," she observed.

"No prominent figure is youthful."(42) This was astonishingly true when one thinks back upon the political arena, dominated by Salisbury, Gladstone and Palmerston, or the literary arena, dominated by Tennyson, Browning and Carlyle. About ordinary lives, which she continued to view as pilgrimages, she was more pessimistic:

> It would be too much to assert that no life ever fulfilled all that it seemed to promise, and there are some lives, perhaps, that fulfill much more; still, on the whole, there are not many who would deny, in looking back on life, that it has been both more painful and more futile than they expected. It has brought much ~~that~~ they did not venture to hope for, but it has withheld more that they made almost sure of. To wake up to the fact that our life is to be a poorer thing than we thought it would be, is a dreary experience, but it is passed long before we reach the close of our career. The main circumstances of life have been accepted as a part of the scenery through which the pilgrimage has lain.(43)

About her own personal life, her achievements and failures, her pleasures and sorrows, she was more reticent. Not even her sisters knew how often she thought of Mack, dead for half a century, yet whom she still recalled as "the brother I loved best & whom I can rarely think of without a stirring at the spring of tears."(44) How often and with what emotions did she also think of her parents, of Uncle Ras, of Godfrey, of Emily, of Erskine and of Browning? When asked to write an article about herself for an American magazine, ~~for Ladies,~~ The Woman's Herald, she commented frankly and without self-pity: "My life ought to have been so much more than it has."(45)

As she sat by the fire in the evenings, alone with her memories and her glass of brandy, or perhaps in what she described as a "vexatious alternation of futilities" of spending "hours of darkness in trying to sleep & of light in trying to wake," did she regret the life she had chosen - or if not chosen, merely accepted? If she could live her life over again, would it be the same?

* * * * *

After her cousin George Darwin's death, only eleven months before her own, she observed:

> The deaths of my juniors are now common & natural & inevitably turn my mind to my own. That sentence arouses feelings both too deep and too commonplace for expression, but the thought of death is like some brightly lighted mirror in the dark which vividly lights up my past, & I am less than most persons of my age taken into the future by any commerce with the young. I find difficulty of hearing an insurmountable barrier with them. This must be my fault, for I did not feel it from the other end with either of the deaf friends of my girlhood - Harriet Martineau or Madame Sismondi. But it is one I cannot change & so in one sense my old age is solitary... but at 80 one has many unseen companions - not all welcome, but all instructive. And it is well to have plenty of time to listen to them. Would that Age could impart to youth some of their lessons. If one could only impart to a single soul the strange chemistry that is exercised by memory, the bitter things that one can remember with a smile & the contrasted change in what seemed sweet - one feels as if it might make life easier to that one. But we are all so different that perhaps it would be in any case impossible.(46)

At the age of eighty, she still was troubled with uncertainty, expressing an opinion, then taking the role of the Devil's advocate, dissecting the flaws in what she had just declared to be true - or perhaps this tendency always to see both sides of an issue was merely the habit of a lifetime. She seldom complained of physical pain, though she never fully recovered from the second cancer operation. And, in the spring of 1913, her eyesight worsened, so that writing as well as reading became a strain: "I have suffered so much from the dread of blindness that every suggestion of an approach to it touches a very sore place in my mind. I was told some years ago that I had Cataract in both eyes & since then my sphere of vision is sensibly contracted but within that narrow realm is not confused."(47)

She visited Idlerocks in May of 1913, but found herself longing to get back to London to her own house and her own small garden. The

pattern of youth repeated itself in old age. Effie and Hope were inseparable, compatible even when arguing, as they frequently did, particularly over politics - Hope was a staunch Tory and Effie a "fierce Liberal." Like young Mary, who was now thirty-three and a dutiful companion to both her Aunt Effie and her mother, Snow was an outsider, even though she knew that her sisters were and always would be devoted to her. While they were "the two people she loved best in the world" they could never love her as she loved them or as they loved each other. Snow was simply too pure and too intellectual, just as Mary was too coarse and too unintellectual. Hope and Effie were both deaf now, too, and all three sisters used ear trumpets which, as they bent over the card table in the evenings, were "twisting and tangling together like a handful of snakes." Effie and Hope were, however, more sympathetic to Snow's writing of the biography of their great-grandfather than they had been toward her earlier writings. They were less critical of her in other ways, even tolerating without sarcasm "our sister's excessive fondness for brandy."

* * * * *

Still, now that she felt her physical and mental stamina declining, Snow preferred London to Staffordshire. While not offering the same sort of intellectual stimulus as Effie and Hope, Marian Hughes was a satisfactory companion. Intellectual stimulation was no longer so important, though finishing the biography of her great-grandfather was her duty: "I am getting on but slowly with my work, but I do get on."(48) Realizing that it was unlikely that she would finish the book, though a first draft was already completed, Snow asked Herford if he would edit it if she were unable to do it herself and he, of course, agreed. Though he was in Manchester, he continued to be her "devoted nephew," writing frequently and calling upon her, or even staying with her when he came to London.

In July her other friend of latter years, Alfred Benn, returned to London and called upon her, but there had been a misunderstanding as to the day, and she expected him a week earlier than proposed. While waiting for him on the wrong Sunday and feeling anxious that he did not come, she consoled herself by re-reading his article on Nietzsche, of whom she observed: "Differing so profoundly as I do from his initial & fundamental belief I was somewhat surprised to find how many sentences from his pen I can agree with."(49)

She was also uneasy about meeting Benn again and wrote to him: "I daresay it was all my mistake about the day. I have no confidence in anything I write now-a-days. I fear it is - our meeting I mean - a mere experiment. I must have grown deafer in the 2 years since we met, but it is a fitful deafness, & I never know how it will turn out... We will depend upon the pen if we find no other channel tolerably easy."(50)

Her fears were apparently unjustified, for four days later she told him: "I was greatly pleased on Sunday to find the gates of silence had not closed between us, as I feared they might have done..."(51) It was their last meeting. A month later she wrote her last letter to him which ended with: "I wish I cd write on. I have so much to say. But I am oppressed by nausea & sleeplessness & must stop...".(52) At that time she must have known that she was dying and, as she herself candidly observed, the pilgrimage had been more painful and futile than she had expected. Still, three months before her death, or, at what she was fond of describing as "the eleventh hour," an almost miraculous event occurred which surely brought comfort and solace to her.

The letters which she had written to Browning half a century earlier were returned to her by a man whom she had never met. They had come up for sale at Sotheby, Wilkinson & Hodge in an extensive four-day auction of the property of the late R.W. Barrett Browning, Esq, ordered by the administrators of his estate and catalogued as "The

Browning Collections," including relics of his parents Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. On Friday 2 May 1913 Lot 302, which contained upwards of fifty letters from the Revd. J.D. Williams and Julia Wedgwood's letters, described as: "A large packet of Letters, some on literary topics, referring to Landor, Lord Houghton, etc.," was sold for fourteen shillings to Gabriel Wells, a New York book dealer.

As records have been destroyed, it is not known to whom Wells sold them - or it is possible that, having read them, he didn't sell them at all, but returned them to Snow himself. In any event, a man whom Snow did not know but who knew of her and knew that she was alive and living in London, kindly returned them to her. It seems unlikely that her enigmatic letter dated 30 August 1913 (which, unfortunately, is missing its envelope) could refer to any other correspondence. No known letter of hers exists written after this time. As she was suffering considerably in the final stages of the cancer which killed her, to have written what at first seems like a casual thank-you must have occasioned considerable effort on her part:

> Dear Sir
>
> Accept my warm & earnest thanks, & since you have quite innocently read those letters let me assure you that nothing in them need modify in the slightest degree your opinion of the person to whom they are addressed. I have done myself the pleasure of sending you one of my books in which some pages may perhaps interest you, but it is not to trouble you for any comment or thanks.
>
> I am dear Sir sincerely & gratefully yours
> Frances Julia Wedgwood(53)

While she had carefully kept Browning's letters, she had not known that he had kept hers. His determination to destroy all correspondence, so that after his death there would be no probing into his private life by the "gossiping literary parasites" he so despised, was well known. It was also common knowledge, which Snow would have heard, that Browning had burned almost all of the letters to him from his friends - except

those from his wife Elizabeth. He could not bring himself to destroy these and had said to Pen: "Here. These are your mother's letters to me, and mine to her. Do what you like with them after I have gone." That he had not been able to destroy Snow's letters either must have convinced her, at the eleventh hour, that he had truly loved her. Had she been able to believe this earlier, and had she been less antipathetic to the sexual instincts which she believed inhibited a perfect spiritual union - how much happier both their lives might have been. But neither she nor Browning were the sort to mourn over what might have been. Certain stanzas of Browning's poem The Last Ride Together, though it was written before he and Snow had met, seem to reflect the misunderstanding between them:

> What need to strive with life awry?
> Had I said that, had I done this,
> So might I gain, so might I miss.
> Might she have loved me? Just as well
> She might have hated, who can tell!
> Where had I been now if the worst befell?

In the last few weeks of her life Snow must have experienced great pleasure, mingled with some sadness, in re-reading those letters, both hers to him and his to her, and in re-living the excitement of those Sunday afternoons half a century earlier when Browning first came to call on her. What was said behind those closed parlour doors at Cumberland Place and whether they did indeed meet again somewhere else will probably never be known. Snow, too, wanted her privacy, yet she, no more than Browning, could bring herself to destroy those letters - or at least, she did not destroy all of them. Certainly when her letters to Browning were returned to her, she was too ill to be able to edit them as she had done her other correspondence. Now one can only speculate that, as with Emily's letters, certain unsuitable revelations may have been "committed to the flames." Above all she would have wished to protect the popular, heroic image of Browning as the greatest of poets

and the most faithful of lovers. As for herself, she was aware of being an intellectual anachronism, a Victorian woman of no great historical importance, who had suffered most consciously from the twin terrors of the Age - sexuality and the crumbling condition of Christianity.

* * * * *

On 25 November 1913 she died peacefully at her home in Lansdowne Road. Had she read her obituary in The Times (unsigned, though probably written by Herford) she would have been both flattered and amused at some of the remarks made in the summation of her life.

> Masculine force of intellect and of will were allied in her also with spiritual wisdom and intuitive insight, and both qualities found expression in the great book "The Moral Ideal", which remains the most enduring achievement of one of the most gifted women of her generation. Girls had to struggle for the higher learning in her early days, but "Snow" Wedgwood - the beautiful name by which she was known to her intimates - overcame most of the disabilities of her sex, and won the command of a very ample and varied learning, subject though her Greek might doubtless be to the feminine failing of "wrong accents."

"Feminine failings," whether fantasies of the masculine imagination or actual shortcomings, were in the final ~~analogy~~ analysis her tragedy - for she could be neither a militant feminist nor the submissive, virtuous, sexless, unthinking "good woman" that was the Victorian ideal of femininity. Much too sensitive and gloomy and introspective, she was instinctively attracted to the world of the intellect, whereas anti-intellectualism (meaning reliance upon authority or conscience rather than upon logical reason) was the prevailing attitude of the time. Quite simply, she was startlingly advanced for her time and unforgiveably advanced for a woman.

According to the wishes of Effie and Hope, who lived to the venerable ages of ninety-four and ninety-one, she was cremated in London and her ashes were buried in Staffordshire beside Godfrey in the little

Moddershall Churchyard near the entrance to Idlerocks. On her tombstone is inscribed:

Thou hast chastened me sore but hast not
given me over to death

Here are interred the ashes of
Our sister Julia Wedgwood
Daughter of Hensleigh Wedgwood
Sometime of Maer in this county
HER WORDS SPOKEN OR WRITTEN
ENLIGHTENED AND CONSOLED MANY HEARTS
SHE LIVED AND DIED IN LONDON
1833-1913

Delight thou in the Lord and He shall
give thee thy heart's desire

Never in life or death did she have her heart's desire, nor, even if she had recognized what it was, could she have accepted it, though she knew her life "ought to have been so much more than it was." More appropriate for an epitaph than the Biblical verses her sisters chose were Godfrey's words in celebration of her seventy-first birthday: "You have the triumph of that great disability...When I think of you, I am full of wonder at what you have accomplished and what you made of your life... "

Notes.

Unless otherwise stated, all documents cited are in the Wedgwood Archives at the University of Keele. Most of these documents are numbered and prefixed by the initials W/M, indicating material from the Mosley Collection. Some of those which are part of a collected correspondence are grouped together under the same finding number. Many are dated or else enclosed in a postmarked envelope; however, some are not and are therefore identified only by the finding number. If the date is mentioned in the text of the letter, it is eliminated from the relevant Note.

Some letters in a collected correspondence usually dated but which, in occasional instances, have no date, are followed by n.d. (no date) after the finding number.

Certain general source material and a book frequently cited have been abbreviated as follows:

DNB Dictionary of National Biography

EB Encyclopaedia Britannica

CFL A Century of Family Letters. Litchfield, H.E. 2 vols. Cambridge: Privately Printed, 1915

UCL is University College, London.

Notes.

INTRODUCTION (pp. 9-23)

1. Quoted in Wedgwood's The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood, "A Memoir of Frances Julia Wedgwood," p. xvii
2. Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays, "Biography," p. 326
3. Vulliamy's English Letter Writing, p. 7
4. Snow's two sisters Katherine Euphemia (Effie) b. 1839, and Hope Elizabeth, b. 1844
5. Milton Bryan was the Bedfordshire home of Lady Inglis with whom Snow's widowed Aunt Mary Rich lived during the latter years of her life.
6. W/M 448, 26 August 1868.
7. Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879) photographer.
8. Combe Hurst, Kingston, Surrey, was the home of Samuel Smith, Esq, J.P., who married Mary Shore. They were uncle and aunt to Florence Nightingale. Their daughters Bertha and Blanche were friends of Snow.
9. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 68
10. George Henry Lewes (1817-1878) DNB: writer and editor of The Leader and Fortnightly Review. Lived from 1854 on as husband of George Eliot, though still married to Agnes Jervis.
11. W/M 438, III, pp 73-74; March 1871
12. W/M 627: 14 April 1912
13. W/M 447: 26 December 1870
14. W/M 627: 3 September 1910
15. W/M 438: 15 July 1866
16. W/M 627: 17 September 1911
17. Forster's "Snow Wedgwood", Two Cheers for Democracy, p. 196

Notes

Chapter 1

Ancestral Portraits (1730-1833) pp. 24-49

1. Preface to First Experiment Book
2. Richard Lovell Edgeworth (1744-1817) DNB: Irish scientific investigator and, with his daughter Maria, author of children's books, friend of Josiah Wedgwood and member of the Lunar Society of Birmingham.
3. E. Darwin to R.L. Edgeworth ? Feb. 1795
4. From nineteenth century biographies the disease of which Josiah Wedgwood died is generally assumed to have been cancer of the jaw; however Dr. Leonard Rakow of New York, a physician and prominent Wedgwood scholar, believes that because of the short duration of the final illness and the sudden appearance of the symptom of mortification a more probable cause of death is Ludwig's Angina, a disease which was not recognized until the 20th century.
5. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 96
6. Thomas Byerley (c. 1747-1810) nephew and business partner of Josiah Wedgwood I. From 1790 to 1810 the Pottery was known as Wedgwood, Sons & Byerley.
7. Horne Tooke (1738-1812) DNB: radical politician, M P for Old Sarum, Wiltshire; supporter of the movement for parliamentary reform; philologist, author and humourist whose witty sayings are contained in S.T. Coleridge's Table Talk.
8. Charles James Fox (1749-1806) DNB: afterwards Baron Holland of Foxley, statesman, champion of liberty; Whig politician and, under Rockingham's Government became the first foreign secretary in English History.
9. Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751-1816) DNB: statesman and dramatist; privy councillor, succeeded Charles James Fox as M P for Westminster; manager and proprietor of the Drury Lane Theatre and author of The Rivals and The School for Scandal, he was the most popular dramatist of his age.
10. Basil Montagu (1770-1851) DNB: essayist, philanthropist, lawyer, commissioner of bankruptcy, friend of Wordsworth and Mackintosh. In 1797 he proposed marriage to Snow's great aunt Sarah Wedgwood and was rejected. He was heavily in debt at the time, and, rightly or wrongly, the Wedgwood family always believed that he wished to marry her for her money.
11. Quoted in The Life of Sir James Mackintosh, II, p. 2-3

12. Quoted in A Century of Family Letters, I, p. 296
13. Sir Robert Inglis (1786-1853) DNB: the only son of Sir Hugh Inglis who for many years was a director of the East India Company, was "an old fashioned Tory M P a strong churchman with many prejudices and no strong abilities." Lady Inglis was Mary Rich's closest friend, and after Sir Robert's death in 1855 the two women lived together as sisters at Lady Inglis's London house in Bedford Square and at Milton Bryan (sometimes called Bryant) her country estate in Bedfordshire until Lady Inglis's death in 1873.
14. Henry Thornton (1760-1815) DNB: MP for Southwark, partner in the banking house of Down, Thornton & Free, Chairman of the Sierra Leone Company and a deeply religious man who became the first President of the Sunday School Society.
15. Quoted in A Century of Family Letters, vol. I, p. 298
16. Ibid, p. 313
17. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 208
18. Quoted in A Century of Family Letters, I, pp. 343-344
19. John Venn (1759-1813) DNB: Rector of Clapham and a central figure in the group of religious philanthropists known as the Clapham Sect; son of author and Evangelical Divine Henry Venn. John Venn's son Henry was also an Evangelical minister and rector at Clapham.
20. Quoted in A Century of Family Letters, I, pp. 422-423
21. Dr. Sydney Smith, St. Catherine's College, Cambridge.
22. MS Darwin Archives, Cambridge University Library.
23. At Maer Hall, the home of Josiah Wedgwood II, there was a weighing machine and a book in which the heights and weights of various members of the family were recorded. The machine and the record book are now at Down House, the Darwin Museum in Downe, Kent.
24. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 175
25. Ibid, p. 334

Notes

Chapter 2

Snowiana (1833-1846) pp. 50-72

1. Quoted in Elspeth Huxley's Florence Nightingale, p. 10
2. In A Century of Family Letters Bessy's illness is referred to as epilepsy, but the symptoms and course of her illness make it far more likely that she suffered a series of strokes which were the result of organic brain disease. For this opinion I am also indebted to Dr. Leonard Rakow of New York and to two other medical doctors and Wedgwood scholars, Dr. Stanley Greenwald of New York City and Dr. James Ricks of McAllen, Texas.
3. Frances (Fanny) Wedgwood (1806-1832) was the third daughter and seventh child of Josiah Wedgwood II and Elizabeth Allen Wedgwood. She was a bridesmaid in the wedding of her brother Hensleigh to their cousin Fanny Mackintosh on 10 January 1832. Eight months later on 20 August 1832, at the age of twenty-six, she died at Maer Hall after a brief illness described as an "inflammatory attack," which was probably peritonitis, although an epidemic of cholera was widespread in England at the time and several deaths from it were recorded in Newcastle in Staffordshire.
4. Lady Gifford, née Harriet Drewe (1794-1857) was the daughter of Caroline Allen and the Rev. Edward Drewe. A first cousin to both Hensleigh Wedgwood and Fanny Mackintosh, she married Robert, Lord Gifford in 1817. They lived in Roehampton in Surrey.
5. Dr. Peter Holland (1766-1855). Physician to the Wedgwood family in London and uncle to Elizabeth Gaskell.
6. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 229
7. The Rev. Alexander John Scott (1805-1866) DNB: Former assistant to the Rev. Edward Irving. Scott was a highly successful minister, a founder of the Holy Catholic Apostolic Church, one of the first professors at the newly-formed Bedford College and founder of the Working Men's College in Manchester. A close friend of the Wedgwoods and of Erasmus Darwin.
8. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, p. 8
9. W/M 930 15 December 1837
10. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 229
11. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, pp. 14-15
12. Ibid, p. 15
13. Quoted in Longford's Victoria R.I., p. 103
14. Most probably this was William Erskine who had married Maitland Mackintosh, Fanny's half-sister. He lived in Edinburgh but made

periodic visits to London.

15. Wedgwood archives 32266-58
16. W/M 1293 n.d.
17. Because there were so many women within the Wedgwood family with the Christian name Fanny, several were referred to in correspondence with the addition of their husbands' Christian names, e.g., Fanny Hensleigh or Fanny Frank.
18. Catherine Darwin to Charles Darwin, 27 September 1833: Cambridge University Library.
19. W/M 406 n.d.
20. Unfortunately the Snowiana scrapbook has disappeared, but there are references to it in the Wedgwood Archives and in A Century of Family Letters.
21. Quoted in CFL, I, p. 465
22. W/M 1293 n.d.
23. Quoted in CFL, I, p. 374
24. Rev. Allen Wedgwood (1796-1882) was the second child and eldest son of John Wedgwood and Jane Allen. He was the Vicar of Maer from 1824 until 1846 when the family sold the Maer estates.
25. "Adantless" was a family joke which originated when one of the Wedgwood children mispronounced Adonis.
26. Quoted in CFL, I, pp. 449-450
27. Ibid, p. 460
28. W/M 943
29. Quoted in CFL, II, p. 52
30. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, p. 52
31. Ibid, pp. 53, 54, 55
32. W/M 294
33. Marianne Darwin (1798-1858) sister of Erasmus and Charles and eldest child of Dr. Robert Darwin and Susannah Wedgwood Darwin. Married Dr. Charles Parker in 1824 and had 5 children, four sons and one daughter Mary.
34. W/M 163
35. Rev. Charles Kingsley (1819-1875) DNB: Anglican churchman, teacher and novelist; author of Westward Ho!. He was a social reformer and among the first churchmen to welcome Darwin's theories and to popularize modern scientific works.
36. Quoted in Houghton's The Victorian Frame of Mind, p. 419
37. George Richmond (1809-1896) DNB: Painter of portraits, especially in water-colour. Student of William Blake. Hon. Fellow of UCL.

38. W/M 261
39. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, pp. 73-74
40. Ibid, p. 113
41. W/M 1150 18 February 1844
42. Mrs. Jones was a governess at Maer Hall to the children of Josiah Wedgwood II from about 1810 to 1822.
43. W/M 252
44. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, p. 140
45. Ibid, p. 143
46. Elizabeth Reid (1789-1866). Daughter of William Sturch, theological writer. Wife of Dr. John Reid (1776-1828) DNB: A feminist, supporter of charitable causes and friend of Harriet Martineau.
47. Thomas Henry Farrer (1819-1899) DNB: Later Lord Farrer. Studied Lincoln's Inn, called to Bar in 1844. Member of the Board of Trade, influential in reforming commercial laws.

Notes

Chapter 3

People Who Count (1846-1854) pp. 73-92

1. W/M 325 n.d.
2. W/M 401 9 October 1875
3. Francis W. Newman (1805-1897) DNB: Brother of John Henry Newman. Professor at Manchester New College, Professor of Latin at UCL 1846-1869. Wrote Phases of Faith in 1850 which tells of his successive rejections of various creeds.
4. W/M 447 n.d.
5. W/M 324 n.d.
6. Ibid, n.d.
7. John Ruskin (1819-1900) DNB: Author, artist, social reformer, advocate of the pre-Raphaelites. Professor of Art at Oxford University. His critical writings on the contemporary art of the mid-Victorian era dictated the taste of the period.
8. W/M 324 14 October 1855
9. Quoted in Tuke's History of Bedford College, p. 20
10. Rev. John Sherren Brewer (1810-1879) DNB: Chaplain to the workhouse of the united parishes of St. Giles-in-the-Fields and St. George, Bloomsbury. A friend of F.D. Maurice, he gave lectures on English Literature, modern history and on workhouse visiting which was published in 1855 in a volume entitled Lectures to Ladies on Practical Studies.
11. William Benjamin Carpenter (1813-1885) DNB: Registrar and Professor of forensic medicine at UCL; he wrote extensively on physiology and developed a doctrine of general oceanic circulation.
12. Quoted in Tuke's History of Bedford College, p. 20
13. Scrapbook, II, Wedgwood MS 57-31805
14. Ibid
15. Ibid, I p. 139
16. Published by Trübner & Co.
17. Mary Somerville (1780-1872). Writer on science, recognized for her exceptional talent by many scientific bodies. Her name is commemorated in the foundation of Somerville College, Oxford.
18. John Allen (1818-1868). Second son of Jessie's brother John Hensleigh Allen. He married Margaretta Snelgar and lived at Tenby in Wales.
19. Scrapbook, I p. 123
20. Thomas Wedgwood (1771-1805). Youngest son of Josiah Wedgwood I. A

close friend of Coleridge; loaned money to Coleridge and William & Dorothy Wordsworth for their trip to Germany.

21. Scrapbook, I p. 137
22. W/M 333 n.d. 1855
23. Thomas Appleton. Brother-in-law of Robert Mackintosh and also of the poet H.W. Longfellow. His father, Nathan Appleton, made a fortune in the manufacture of cotton cloth. The Appletons were a prominent and respected family in Boston, Massachusetts.
24. W/M 252
25. W/M 315 19 March 1851
26. W/M 252 3 October 1851
27. Scrapbook, I p. 114b
28. William Spottiswoode (1825-1883?) physicist, mathematician and President of the Royal Society. His mother was the eldest daughter of the publisher Thomas Norton Longman.
29. W/M 227 probably March 1854
30. W/M 1282 16 May 1852
31. W/M 315 26 November 1852
32. Records of Bedford College
33. Russell Gurney (1804-1878) DNB: Recorder of London, Judge of Sherriff's Court. M.P. for Southampton, Privy Councillor. Appointed by Gladstone to settle British-American claims under the Treaty of Washington. Responsible for Married Women's Property Bill.
34. W/M 333 n.d.

Notes

Chapter 4

A Literary Life (1854-1863), pp. 92-126

1. W/M 324 24 October 1856
2. Ibid, undated, probably autumn 1856
3. Ibid, 2 February 1857
4. Ibid, 14 October 1855
5. W/M 325 18 December 1854
6. W/M 324 1 July 1857
7. Ibid, 15 July 1857
8. Framleigh Hall, I, pp.1-2
9. Ibid, II, p.15
10. Ibid, II, p.234
11. Ibid, II, p.223
12. Ibid, III, p.236
13. Ibid, III, p.282
14. Ibid, III, pp.302-3
15. Ibid, III, p.224
16. Ibid, I, p.26
17. Ibid, I, p.22
18. Ibid, II, p.168
19. Ibid, III, p.307
20. Rev.F.M.Blunt, Rector of Chelsea, was a near neighbour of the Carlyles on Cheyne Row. Snow often attended services at his church and was friendly with him and his wife
21. Maria Martineau, a niece of Harriet's, who was living with her and serving as her nurse and companion
22. Quoted in Arbuckle's thesis, pp. 277-8
23. W/M 333 26 August 1858
24. W/M 324 27 August 1858
25. Ibid, 28 August 1858
26. Ibid, 28 June 1855
27. W/M 377 n.d., probably summer 1858
28. W/M 324 5 August 1858
29. Ibid, 25 August 1858
30. Ibid, 8 December 1858
31. Ibid, 24 December 1858
32. Ibid, 26 December 1858
33. Ibid, 8 February 1859

34. Ibid, 30 December 1858
35. Ibid, 12 May 1859
36. W/M 324, n.d., probably 1858
37. It is most likely that she was referring to Maurice, the hero of her novel Framleigh Hall, rather than to the theologian F.D.Maurice
38. W/M 324 28 August 1858
39. Philip Allen, the son of Seymour Allen, Fanny Allen's great nephew and Snow's second cousin
40. W/M 324 11 October 1860
41. Louise Erskine, daughter of William Erskine and Maitland Mackintosh Erskine, Mary Rich's niece and Snow's first cousin
42. W/M 324 11 October 1860
43. Darwin, Charles, On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, (1859) p.5
44. Wedgwood, Hensleigh, "On the Origin of Language", Introduction to A Dictionary of English Etymology, (1872), pp.7-8
45. "The Boundaries of Science". Macmillan's Magazine
46. An Old Debt, p.1
47. Ibid, p.237
48. Ibid, p.285
49. Sophia Sinnett to Effie Wedgwood, 13 January 1859
50. W/M 324 10 August 1859
51. Ibid, 9 October 1860
52. W/M 315
53. W/M 324 10 January 1859
54. Ibid, 28 April 1858
55. Ibid, 21 January 1860
56. Ibid, 8 November 1860
57. Ibid, 3 April 1860
58. Ibid, 12 February 1863

Notes

Chapter 5

Dear Mr Browning (1863-1865) pp.127-145

1. Richard Monckton Milnes (1909-1895) DNB: First Baron Houghton, a prominent and influential figure in London society and in literary circles. Conservative MP for Pontefract. Contributed poems and occasional reviews to literary publications. Promoted Swinburne and friend of Tennyson, Thomas Campbell and F.D.Maurice
2. Mary Mohl, nee Clarke (1793-1883). An Englishwoman who married the German Orientalist Julius Mohl. They lived in Paris where Mme Mohl had a literary salon and gave occasional music lessons. She was a close friend of Florence Nightingale and Elizabeth Gaskell
3. W/M 324 13 July 1863
4. Ibid
5. W/M 425 undated, probably April 1870
6. Ibid, 4 May 1864
7. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p.27
8. Ibid, p.25
9. W/M 425 25 June 1864
10. Barnabas is the surname of the Cyprian Levite Joseph, an apostle of Paul (Acts 4: 36, 37).
11. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp.26-28
12. Ibid, p.30
13. Ibid, pp.31-2
14. Ibid, p.42
15. Ibid, p.32
16. Ibid
17. Ibid, p.34
18. Ibid, p.50
19. Ibid, p.39
20. Ibid, pp.40-1
21. Ibid, p.94
22. Ibid, p.52
23. Ibid, p.56
24. Scrapbook, I, p.19

25 Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p.45

26. Ibid, p. 46
27. Ibid, p. 59
28. Ibid, p. 70
29. Ibid, p. 40
30. Ibid, p. 52
31. Ibid, pp. 132-133
32. Ibid, pp. 135-136
33. Ibid, p. 14

Notes

Chapter 6

Linlathen (1865-1867) p.p. 146-161

1. "The American friend" is a reference to Browning's receipt of a letter from America which contained a photograph of an unflattering cartoon of Browning writing his Dramatis Personae and supposedly intended as a frontispiece to the American edition.
2. The fourth edition of Browning's collected Poems published by Chapman & Hall on 15 April, 1865, which he had sent her.
3. "Green ones" is a reference to Elizabeth Barrett Browning's Poems which Browning had given Snow in July of 1864.
4. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 138.
5. W/M 324 12 March 1859
6. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, pp. 153-154
7. Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893) DNB: classical scholar and liberal theologian who became Master of Balliol College, Oxford.
8. W/M 325
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid
11. W/M 438
12. Emily Gurney died in 1896 and Snow decided that the letters she had written to Emily were not worthy of publication, though a five volume, partially-edited typescript exists today in the Keele Archives.
13. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, p. 172
14. Both Susan Darwin and Catherine Darwin Langton died the following year, 1866.
15. W/M 346 25 August 1865
16. Iris Veronica Pawson (1888-1982) married in 1906 Ralph Lewis Wedgwood, son of Clement Francis Wedgwood. She gave a taped interview in 1979 mentioning her recollections of Snow and other members of the Wedgwood family.
17. W/M 325
18. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, p. 192
19. The Ring and the Book.
20. Browning was wrong. It was two years and one month.
21. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp. 140-141.
22. Captain Absolute's advice to his servant in Sheridan's comedy The Rivals.

23. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp. 142-143.

Notes

Chapter 7

To Be A Pilgrim (1867-1868) p.p. 162-176

1. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, p. 309
2. John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century
3. W/M 448
4. W/M 325
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Joseph Milsand, French writer, whom Browning met in Paris in 1852 and with whom he maintained a warm friendship up to the time of Milsand's death in September 1886.
8. George Smith (1824-1901) director of the firm Smith, Elder & Co. He had also published Snow's second novel An Old Debt.
9. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp. 144-145.
10. Ibid, pp. 146-147
11. Guy Fawkes day
12. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 166
13. Ibid, p. 157
14. Ibid, pp. 152-153
15. Ibid, p. 158
16. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, II, p. 375.
17. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 166
18. The heroine, a pure innocent girl, in The Ring and the Book.
19. A reference to his dead wife.
20. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp. 172-173
21. Ibid, pp. 175-178
22. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 179
23. Ibid, p. 185
24. Woman's Work and Woman's Culture, edited by Josephine E. Butler and published by Macmillan & Co. in 1869
25. Ibid, p. 261
26. Ibid, p. 269
27. Ibid, p. 253

Notes

Chapter 8

Beloved Emily (1868-70) pp. 177-200

1. W/M 438 Five volumes of unpublished letters between Emily Gurney and Julia Wedgwood. Preface.
2. Ibid, I p.69 undated
3. Ibid, p.73 August 1867
4. Ibid, II, unnumbered, July or August, 1868
5. Ibid, unnumbered and undated
6. Ibid
7. W/M 328 undated
8. W/M 438 October 1869
9. Ibid, II, p.42 November 1868
10. W/M 252
11. W/M 325
12. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp. 191-2
13. W/M 438, II, undated
14. A reference to one of the characters in The Ring and the Book who is symbolic of the darker aspects of human nature
15. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp.194-6
16. Ibid, pp.197-8
17. A character in Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield
18. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, pp.199-200
19. W/M 438, II, p.50
20. Ibid, p.51
21. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p.207
22. W/M 438, II, p.52
23. John Forster (1812-1876) DNB: Historian and biographer. Wrote the two-volume Life of Oliver Goldsmith. Friend of Leigh Hunt and Charles Lamb. Editor of The Examiner 1847-56
24. Ernst Leopold Schlesinger Benzon. A steel magnate, born in Hamburg, Germany, who became sole American agent for the Naylor Vickers Company of Sheffield. In England he lived at 10 Kensington Palace Gardens. He was a collector of books, paintings and sculpture
25. W/M 438, II, p.107
26. W/M 325
27. W/M 448

28. W/M 325
29. Ibid
30. An abbreviation for "photographs"
31. W/M 325
32. Quoted in Letters of Thomas Erskine, II, pp.342-3
33. Ibid
34. W/M 447 17 March 1870
35. Ibid 22 March 1870

Notes

Chapter 9

One Perpetual Farewell (1870-1876) pp. 201-218

1. W/M 425 30 May 1870
2. John Campbell Shairp (1819-1885) DNB: A member of the Linlathen Circle; taught Moral Philosophy at University of Glasgow and University of Edinburgh; became Professor of Poetry at Oxford; wrote numerous books, including Studies in Poetry and Philosophy. In several prefaces he paid tribute to Arthur Clough, Francis W. Newman and Thomas Erskine of Linlathen.
3. William Hanna (1808-1882) DNB: Theological writer, editor and biographer. Editor of North British Review. Minister of St. John's Free Church in Edinburgh. One of the Linlathen Circle.
4. W/M 447 15 April 1877
5. W/M 438 March 1870
6. Henry Sidgwick (1838-1900) DNB: Philosopher, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Trinity College, Cambridge. Friend of F.D. Maurice. Provided the rent for the first house of Newnham College.
7. W/M 438
8. Quoted from Arbuckle's thesis, p. 524
9. W/M 438
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. W/M 448 4 October 1869
13. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 207
14. Ibid, pp. 208-209
15. W/M 438 29 July 1870
16. Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays: Thomas Erskine of Linlathen, p. 77
17. Ibid, p. 78
18. W/M 438
19. Ibid, 5 January 1870
20. Ibid, II, p. 133
21. Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891): Feminist leader in the movement for the education and political rights of women. With Emily Davies established a scheme for the extension of university education to women by establishing an experimental college at Hitchin which developed into Girton College, Cambridge. Married to Eugene Bodichon, an eminent French physician.

22. W/M 438, II, p. 55, undated, but probably summer of 1869. For some reason this letter from Bodichon to Julia Wedgwood was sent on to Emily Gurney.
23. MS. Yale University Library
24. Ibid
25. W/M 401, n.d.
26. The book was probably Daniel Deronda.
27. W/M 438, II, p. 8
28. Richard Buckley Litchfield (1832-1903). A friend of F.D. Maurice and, with him, a founder of the Working Men's College. Interested in literature and music, he never worked, though he gave some lectures on English Literature at the Working Men's College.
29. Vernon Lushington. From 1877 to 1900 was county judge for Surrey and Berkshire. He was son of Stephen Lushington M.P, director of the East India Company and a friend of Sir James Mackintosh.
30. W/M 159
31. W/M 447 5 April 1872
32. Ibid, 15 April 1877
33. Ibid, 22 October 1876
34. W/M 401 14 September 1874
35. W/M 438 n.d., probably November 1872
36. W/M 447 Good Friday 1875
37. W/M 325

Notes

Chapter 10

The Moral Ideal (1876-1905) pp.219-247

1. W/M 328
2. W/M 447
3. W/M 346
4. W/M 447
5. Ibid, 5 June 1878
6. Quoted from Wedgwood Circle, p.318
7. Ibid, p.318
8. Phantasms of the Living, Introduction, I, pp.lii, liii, liv
9. Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) EB: Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian who responded to a divine vision and call. His spiritual senses were opened so that he might be in the spiritual world as consciously as in this world.
10. Edward Irving (1792-1834) EB: Minister of the Church of Scotland, closely associated with the founding of the Catholic Apostolic Church. He preached the Incarnation of Jesus and His imminent second coming. Irving was deposed from the ministry in the Church of Scotland.
11. Phantasms of the Living, I, p.lvi
12. W/M 438, V, p.309
13. Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, VI, 1889-90
14. Phantasms of the Living, II, Supplement, p.384
15. Quoted in Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays, pp.1 and 8
16. Ibid, p.107 and 113
17. Ibid, p.179
18. W/M 447 10 September 1875
19. Ibid, 17 April 1878
20. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p.330
21. The Moral Ideal, pp.v,vi,vii
22. Ibid, p.83
23. Ibid, pp.40-1

24. Ibid p. 43
25. Ibid pp. 144-145
26. Ibid p. 451
27. Ibid p. 462
28. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 334
29. Ibid p. 334
30. Ibid p. 336
31. The Message of Israel, p. 309
32. Quoted in Robert Browning and Julia Wedgwood, p. 208
33. The Message of Israel, pp. 298, 299, 300
34. W/M 438 Preface
35. Quoted in W/M 438 II, p. 63
36. Scrapbook, Preface
37. W/M 1322 5 February 1904
38. Quoted in The Wedgwood Circle, p. 353

Notes

Chapter 11

De Senectute (1905-1913) pp. 248-275

1. "De Senectute", Nineteenth Century Essays, p.404
2. W/M 627 4 July 1911
3. Quoted in E.M.Forster: Marianne Thornton, p.223
4. Quoted in footnote W.E.Houghton: The Victorian Frame of Mind, pp.419-20
5. Newman's Parochial Sermons, quoted in W.E.Houghton The Victorian Frame of Mind, p.234
6. W/M 627 26 September 1909
7. W/M 627 29 March 1910
8. Quoted from "Richard Holt Hutton" in Nineteenth Century Teachers, pp.143-4. The sentence was used in the context of English fiction, but is equally applicable to biography.
9. "Biography", Nineteenth Century Teachers, p.326
10. The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood, Preface, pp. iii-iv
11. Ibid, Memoir, p.xxix
12. Ibid, Introduction, p.xxxi
13. Ibid, pp.xxxi-xxxii
14. Ibid, p.xl
15. Meteyard's Life of Josiah Wedgwood, II, pp.109-10
16. The Personal Life of Josiah Wedgwood, p.111
17. W/M 627 2 July 1909
18. W/M 627 20 November 1909
19. W/M 627 9 May 1911
20. W/M 627 31 July 1910
21. W/M 627 9 October 1910
22. W/M 627 8 June 1910
23. W/M 627 9 October 1910
24. W/M 627 20 October 1910
25. W/M 627 letter begun 14 January 1911, finished 21 February 1911
26. W/M 627 19 April 1911
27. W/M 627 8 October 1911
28. W/M 627 9 October 1910
29. W/M 627 9 May 1911
30. W/M 627 20 November 1910

31. W/M 627 4 December 1911
32. W/M 627 31 July 1910
33. W/M 627 4 March 1912
34. Sir Wilfred Laurier (1841-1916) DNB: Prime Minister of Canada 1896-1911
35. W/M 627 ? June 1911
36. W/M 627 5 May 1912
37. W/M 627 14 October 1912
38. The ill person (other than her sister Hope) was probably Meta Gaskell who died in October 1913
39. W/M 627 8 March 1913
40. Dr. Robertson Nicoll (1851-1923) DNB: Nonconformist minister, journalist, editor and publisher of theological treatises, founder of the literary momthly The Bookman
41. Nineteenth Century Teachers, Introduction, pp.v-vi
42. Ibid, "De Senectute", p.403
43. Ibid, p.409
44. W/M 627 8 June 1910
45. W/M 328 6 August 1908
46. W/M 627 21 December 1912
47. W/M 627 undated, probably autumn 1912
48. W/M 627 8 March 1913
49. W/M 627 8 July 1913
50. W/M 627 4 July 1913
51. W/M 627 8 July 1913
52. W/M 627 12 August 1913
53. MS, Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University, Waco, Texas

A Select Bibliography

All works mentioned in the text and notes have been included here. A further selection of works found useful or interesting, though not all standard works of reference, has also been included.

I. A. Manuscripts:

Wedgwood Papers, deposited by Josiah Wedgwood & Sons, Ltd., Barlaston, Stoke-on-Trent, at the University of Keele.

The main body of Wedgwood family manuscript material is on deposit at Keele. The archives there are provisionally sorted by reference to their source of acquisition (see Abstract) and given a temporary holding number. Eventually the archives will be thoroughly catalogued. As a guide to my notation, the following should be kept in mind. The Wedgwood-Mosley collection which remained in the family until the death of Julia's niece Mary Wedgwood Mosley in 1953, contains most of the material relevant to Julia and her contemporaries and is prefixed by a W/M before the finding number. This prefix was allocated by the Keele librarians. Generally speaking, the letters are held in runs by correspondents and vary considerably in quantity -- some containing only one letter, others as many as four hundred. Where I have cited undated letters, I have supplied if possible approximate dates, frequently from a postmark on the envelope or from another letter to which this seemed to be a reply. I take scholarly responsibility for this information.

Julia Wedgwood to unknown recipient, 30 August, 1913: MS, Armstrong Browning Library, Baylor University.

Julia Wedgwood to George Eliot, undated, probably 1869; MS, Yale University Library.

Papers in the possession of Mrs Margaret Boxall Wedgwood and Mr and Mrs Hensleigh Wedgwood.

B. Unpublished PhD. Dissertation:

Arbuckle, Elizabeth Marie. "Harriet Martineau's Letters to Fanny Wedgwood." Diss. University of Edinburgh, 1978.

There has been little research attention to Julia Wedgwood, nor have the materials in the Wedgwood archives been extensively used by scholars. The dissertation by Dr. Arbuckle is the first systematic investigation of one section of the archives.

II. A. Books by Julia Wedgwood:

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An Old Debt. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1859.

John Wesley and the Evangelical Reaction of the Eighteenth Century. London: Macmillan, 1870.

The Moral Ideal. London: Trübner & Co., 1888.

The Message of Israel in the Light of Modern Criticism. London: Isbister, 1894.

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B. Major Articles by Julia Wedgwood:

It is known that for a period spanning half a century Julia Wedgwood contributed extensively to journals. Many of her contributions, particularly to the Spectator and to Macmillan's Magazine were unsigned. Sometimes her work can be traced from internal evidence or from correspondence, but a more comprehensive search in the files of several Victorian journals might well be profitable. Eventually, as another research project, a check-list of her articles and essays will need to be compiled. An essay written as a chapter for a book is

listed by the book title. With this exception, the articles are listed chronologically under the title of the journal. Essays reprinted in the book Nineteenth Century Teachers and Other Essays are not repeated. However, articles which later became chapters in Julia Wedgwood's larger works have been included.

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Contemporary Review:

"Female Suffrage and Its Influence on Married Life," 20, August, 1872, pp. 360-370.

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"Male and Female Created He Them," 56, July, 1889, pp. 120-133.

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"The Message of Israel," Part I, 62, October, 1892, pp. 579-589.

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"The Boundaries of Science," Part I, 2, June, 1860, pp. 134-8.

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"Social Reform in England," 87 OS, January, 1867, pp. 150-171.

III. Secondary Sources found useful or referred to in the Notes. Standard works of reference have been omitted. As previously stated, very little has been written about or relevant to Julia Wedgwood.

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